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EXCITING WESTERN

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

ANC

LOVABLE LIARS
By W. C. TUTTLE

WASHED IN BLOOD
By A. LESLIE

RANGER OUT OF BOUNDS
By JACKSON COLE

Reducing Specialist Says:

"Thanks to the Spot Reducer, I lost four inches around the hips and three inches around the waistline. It's amazing." Mary Martin, Long Island City, N. Y.

LOSE WEIGHT

where it shows most

REDUCE

most any part of the body with

SPOT REDUCER

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HOW SPOT REDUCER WORKS. The Spot Reducer uses the age old principle of massage. It breaks down excess fatty tissue, tones the muscles and flesh and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat economically, simply, pleasantly. In a recent Medical Book, edited by the chairman and two other members of Council on Physical Therapy of AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, the following is stated on page 34, Chapter 18, Vol. 3.: "Beyond all question something can be done by massage to reduce local deposits of FAT . . . There can however, be no question that massage applied to the region of the HIPS can and does, reduce the amount of fatty deposits in this region" This book is a reliable unbiased source of information and many doctors refer to it for the last word in Physical Therapy. This prompted us to develop and have doctors test the SPOT REDUCER.

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In recent tests made by outstanding licensed Medical Doctors on more than 100 people with the use of Spot Reducer everyone lost pounds and inches in a few short weeks, in HIPS, ABDOMEN, LEGS, ARMS, BUTTOCKS, etc. And the users say: "IT WAS FUN AND THEY ENJOYED IT." The Spot Reducer worked as well on men as it did on women. The Spot Reducer way controls weight, once down to normal it helps retain your new "SLIM FIGURE" as long as you like. Look and feel better, see bulges disappear within the first weeks. The beauty of this scientifically designed SPOT REDUCER is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. Thousands have lost weight this way in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in the privacy of your own room in your spare time.

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EXCITING WESTERN

VOL. 16, No. 2 A THRILLING PUBLICATION NOVEMBER, 1948

LOVABLE LIARS

By W. C. TUTTLE

The rollicking range detectives may or may not look like a pair of bandits, but they certainly steal the show at Smoke Tree when bank robbers stalk! A complete Tombstone and Speedy novelet 11

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WASHED IN BLOOD ..... A. Leslie 42
There's no quarter asked or given when his foes finally hunt Jim Wayne down! An exciting novelet

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A true story of grim crime on the Arizona desert

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Whether taming horses or men—gentleness wins!

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A meaty department devoted to the great outdoors

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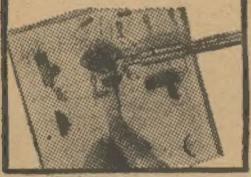

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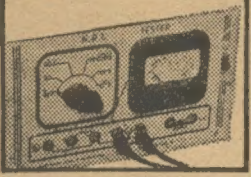

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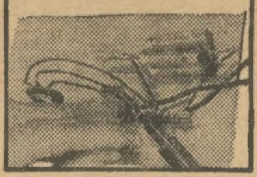

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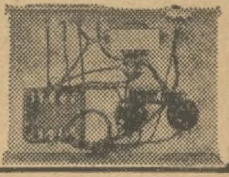

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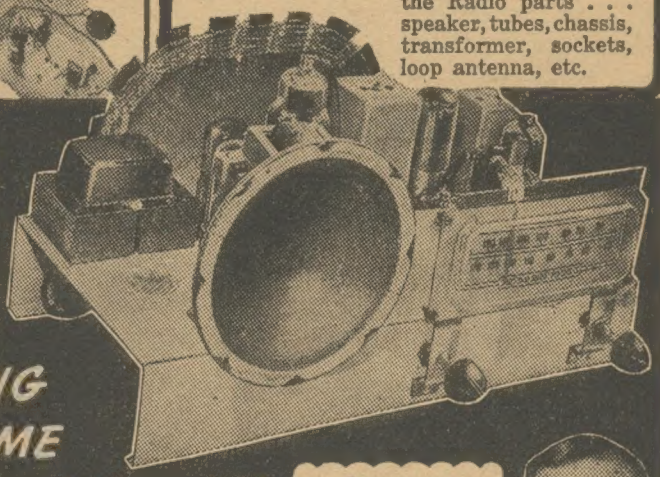

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A Department for Readers Conducted by CAPTAIN RANGER

FOLKS, ever hear of a tree farmer? It's a new kind of outdoor "farming" activity. And it is important. Moreover, it's on the increase among both the modern and the older settlers in many parts of the West—and in the South as well.

We need trees—badly. This may be a metal age, but wood and wood products are still a vital and essential part of our economy. There's another side to tree farming too. As one western 'tree farmer' we know of aptly put it: "Once yuh get a tree farm established, the trees keep growing night and day. They earn money for yuh while yuh sleep—or go fishin'. That's hard to beat."

He's right as bacon for breakfast. Trees harvested on a sustained yield basis will bring in a steady income year after year. It will do the same for your kids and grandchildren if the tract is taken care of and kept up in proper shape.

On certain types of land good mainly for forest growth, and not much else, tree farming will give a better cash return per acre, and for the work involved than any other kind of crop.

Grand Tree Country

Let's take the case of this fellow I mentioned a few paragraphs back. His tree farm happens to be out in the Pacific Northwest. Snohomish County, Washington to be more specific.

That's grand tree country. So is the whole region. And we are not talking about lumbering and big logging operations either—just tree farming, a sort of little second cousin to large scale timber cutting and a different proposition altogether.

Anyhow this chap—he is a vetern of World War I—picked out a good-sized tract (about 800 acres) of reasonably-priced cut-over timber lands in Snohomish county a long time back Like many such tracts, it was pretty well clogged up with brush and second-growth timber.

As a starter he put up a cabin to live in—log of course—and some log outbuildings, and hadn't even made a dent in the second-growth wood on what he expected would someday be a regular farm. He did a lot of hard work wrassling stumps and cleared himself an acre. That would give him room for a family-sized truck garden, and space maybe for a household flock of chickens to run around in.

And it left him 799 acres to go.

Then he got to thinking. Most of his neighbor cut-over timber tract farmers, even when they cleared the bulk of their farms for crops, left a good-sized woodlot for their own use—cordwood, fence posts and the like. Why not, this fellow figured, just keep his garden acre for home use and operate the rest as a big woodlot? There was even then a good demand for these more or less minor woods products. The demand, incidentally, is much greater today.

Instead of clearing out his woodland, he simply cleaned it up giving the best of the trees a better chance to grow and re-seed themselves naturally. He never logged the land off, giving it what the timber men call a "clear cut." That was not his plan, nor his program.

He cut only trees at the best growth for the purpose for which he marketed them, whether poles, posts, piling or cordwood.

Sustained Yield

In other words he kept his tract so that his timber stand would continue to grow to best advantage. He didn't try for a single cash cleanup on a big cut. Instead he kept money coming in year after year from the cuttings he made on a sustained yield basis.

Averaging good times and bad, the returns were higher than most people would guess offhand. About$50 per acre for cordwood alone. That covered his basic expenses, and left an initial profit. It meant that the fence posts, the poles or occasional pilings, the maple and birch

(Continued on Page 8)

To those who think LEARNING MUSIC is hard . . .

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TRAIL BLAZERS

(Continued from Page 6)

sold separately to furniture factories and surplus seedlings marketed for planting elsewhere were so much gravy.

Then there were sidelines, the egg money you could call it of the tree farm. Things like ferns, and huckleberries, cascara bark, pine cones that could be gathered up and sold to novelty firms who silvered them for Christmas decorations or made them into other ornaments.

A Regular Business

Today tree farming is a regular business out in Snohomish County—and the rest of the Pacific Northwest as well. Snohomish County has its own tree farmers' association. Some of the members are full time woods products harvesters. Others have part of their land, anywhere from 50 to 100 acres in tree farms, and the rest devoted to more conventional farm crops.

There's a growing band of enthusiastic tree farmers over in a far different section of the country as well, the deep south and west into the east Texas piney woods belt. After all there is no law limiting tree farming to any one area. It's a measure conservation officials and Forest Service authorities advocate and welcome wherever economical tree growing is feasible.

Down south and in the Texas piney woods country tree farmers generally specialize in growing loblolly pine as a crop. This particular tree, also known as the shortleaf pine, has always been one of the South's greatest natural resources. It grows from southern Delaware and eastern Maryland over the south's coastal plain and lower Piedmont sections all the way south and west into southern Arkansas and eastern Texas.

In this region it contributes probably as much as all other pines combined in the total amount of second-growth pine cut for firewood, paper plup products, poles, lumber and general wood uses.

Aside from making a readily salable product, it grows rapidly and is easily propagated. Three important considerations as far as the tree farmer is concerned.

How Tall Do They Grow?

The U. S. Department of Agriculture has a record of one 12 year old loblolly that stood

(Continued on Page 107)

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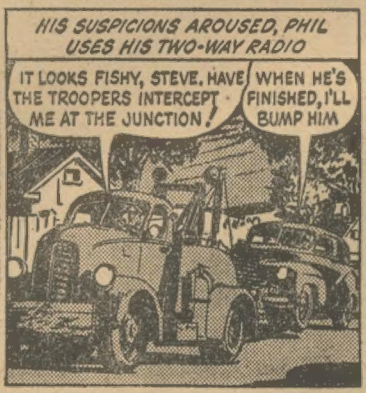
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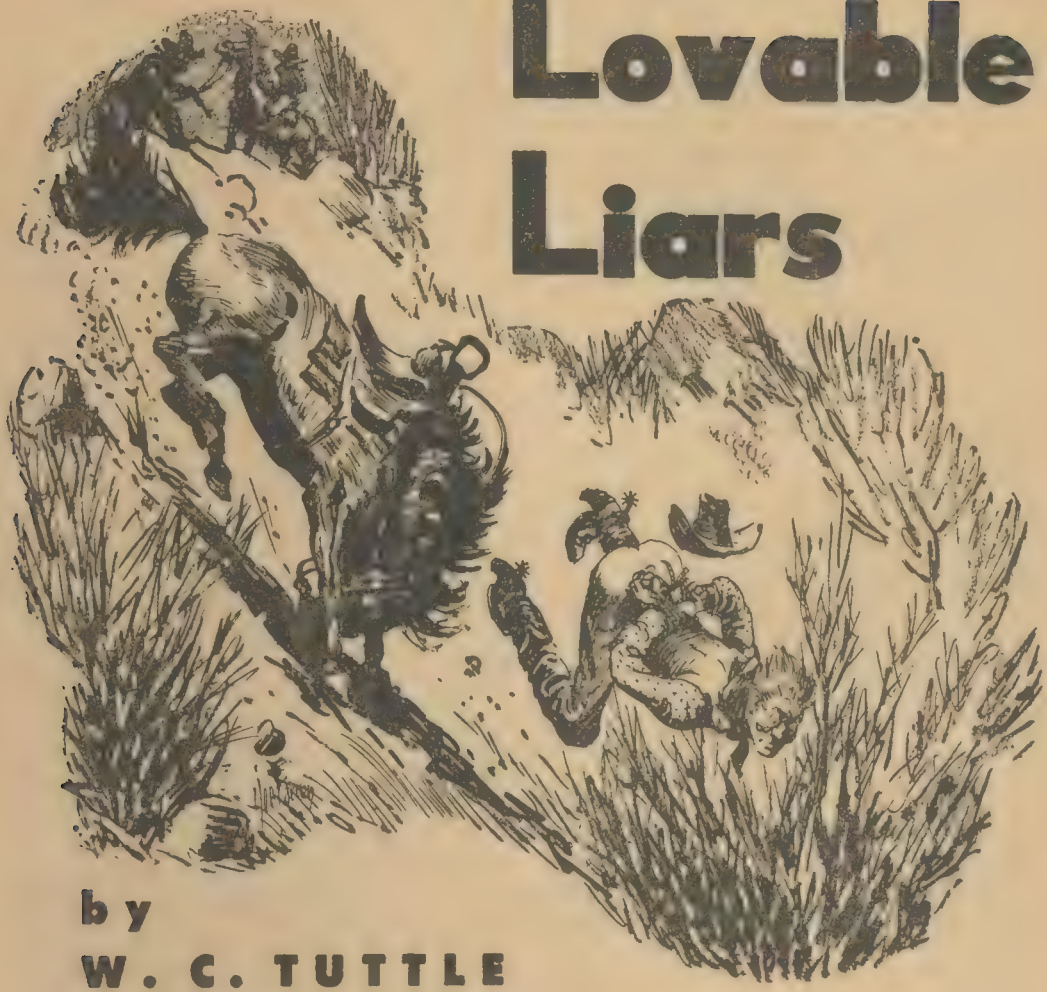
H-MMM... I'D BETTER CLEAN UP

YOU'RE OKAY IN MY BOOK, SON. I'M COUNTING ON SEEING YOU TOMORROW
THAT MEANS A SWELL JOB FOR MILLS, OR I DON'T KNOW THE OLD MAN
HOUR LATER

BELIEVE ME, MEN, YOU GET CLEANER, BETTER-LOOKING SHAVES AND SAVE MONEY, TOO, WITH THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE MUCH KEENER AND LONGER-LASTING THAN OTHER LOW-PRICE BLADES AND FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTE BLADES IN THE CONVENIENT NEW TEN-BLADE PACKAGE
THIN Gillette BLADES
4-10¢ 10-25¢
New ten-blade package has compartment for used blades.

A TOMBSTONE AND SPEEDY NOVELET

Lovable Liars



by
W. C. TUTTLE

The rollicking range detectives may or may not look like a pair of bandits, but they sure steal the show at Smoke Tree when killers and bank robbers stalk!

CHAPTER I

Afoot And Unhappy

THIS was one of life's darkest moments. It was quite dark, physically, and there was only the sighing wind and the drip, drip from the water-tank. Too, the wind on the telegraph wires set up sort of a dirge. And in all that vast desert waste there was not a sign of a light.

"Tombstone" Jones, all seven feet of him, and "Speedy" Smith, his skinny partner, who could only boast of five feet, seven, sat in against the timbers of the water-tank, hunched together, rather miserable, to say the least. Speedy was nursing a skinned knee, while Tombstone complained about a skinned nose and raw knuckles.

While not visible at night, both men

TOMBSTONE JONES

were clad in the worn garments of the typical cowpoke, including high-heeled boots and belted guns—but there were no horses for them to ride. These two men, regardless of appearance and intelligence, were employed as cattle detectives by the Cattle Association.

"Yuh know," mused Tombstone," that brakeman didn't have no right to throw us off that freight train, even if we didn't have the dollar apiece."

"Put the blame where it belongs," sighed Speedy. "We sold the hosses and saddles, and that gave us plenty money to go where Jim Keaton wanted us to go. But no! No, you had to—"

"I know," interrupted Tombstone. "I dreamed up a system that'd beat any roulette wheel on earth."

When their job had been finished at Sunset Wells they had sold their horses and saddles, expecting to be sent by train to the location of their next investigation.

Speedy had wired Jim Keaton, secretary of the Association.

FOOT LOOSE AND FANCY FREE. SEND US WHERE YOU WILL. ALSO SEND US SOME MONEY. IT COSTS MONEY EVERY TIME WE TURN AROUND.

In the meantime Tombstone Jones found a roulette wheel, and in about fifteen minutes he had plunged the firm of Jones and Smith into poverty. Jim Keaton's reply was:

STOP TURNING AROUND. RIDE YOUR HORSES TO SMOKE TREE. PICK UP INSTRUCTIONS THERE.

Smoke Tree was exactly one hundred miles from Sunset Wells.

"If we had our hosses," said Tombstone, "we could ride to Smoke Tree, if we had enough money to buy our saddles back."

"That remark," said Speedy, "may not be the dumbest one yuh ever made, but it'll do until yuh open yore big mouth again."

AND that was why they were sitting in the dark, listening to the drip of water from a desert water-tank. Tombstone sighed and scuffed his heel in the sand.

"Fine thing!" he snorted. "Two of the best cow detectives on earth—ditched. It's humiliatin', I'd say. And us so badly needed in Smoke Tree. My heart aches for them poor people."

"My knee aches for me," said Speedy wearily.

"Pick up instructions in Smoke Tree!" snorted Tombstone. "That's a fine thing. I suppose they're jist a-layin' around in the street waitin' for us to come along and pick 'em up. Sometimes I wonder if Jim Keaton's got good sense."

"After listenin' to you, I don't believe he has," said Speedy.

"Speedy, yore trouble is, yuh don't listen to me enough."

"My trouble," said Speedy, "is in listenin' to yuh a-tall."

After a period of silence, Tombstone said, "My trouble is in not havin' enough money to prove my system at roulette. Yuh can't prove nothin' with only two hundred and eighty dollars. Some day I'm goin' to have me at least three hundred dollars, and then you watch me."

"If part of it's mine, I shore will!" said Speedy emphatically.

Above the sighing of the wind came a humming sound from the rails. Speedy got up quickly and stepped onto the tracks. From some distance away they heard the wail of a locomotive whistle.

"Let's git over on this side," Speedy said. "If it stops for water, we'll pile on. Even gettin' thrown off is better than settin' here."

They crossed the track and sprawled in the brush. Further up the track was a small red shack, which they had not seen in the dark, and there was a red light over the track.

"Must be sort of a depot, and they're flaggin' the train," Speedy said. "This is a cinch, Tombstone. They've got to stop—c'mon."

They got up and headed for the red light, but keeping far enough away so no one could see them. Again they sprawled flat, not too far from the tracks. They heard the engineer acknowledge the red light, and slacken speed. It was a passenger train, making its daily run on this branch line. It was composed of a baggage car, one coach, and also two box-cars.

Speedy led the way, straight for the blind-baggage. This was the end of the baggage car next to the tender, where there was no door. They crouched low on the steps and waited for the train to proceed. At night there was little chance of detection on the blind-baggage.

After a short wait, the train rolled on.

"Good evenin', Smoke Tree," Speedy chuckled. "That brakeman done us a favor—we're ridin' in style."

"Everythin' allus turns out for the best, Speedy. I've allus said that, and you know it. What do yuh call a feller who allus looks on the bright side of things?"

"In our business—suckers."

The train lurched ahead, rapidly gaining speed, but only for a mile or so, when it came to a sudden and jolting stop. On their side of the track, only a dozen feet away, was a high, rocky wall. Speedy swung out and looked both ways in the darkness, but could see nothing. He was afraid to look out the other side.

"Prob'ly a cow on the track," said Tombstone.

"The engineer didn't whistle."

"Mebbe he didn't see her."

"Well, if they want to stop here for a while, it's all right with me. I ain't in exactly no hurry."

"That's right," agreed Tombstone. "Let Jim Keaton worry about us gettin' on the job, huh?"

They had been there quite a while. The engine panted ahead of them, but that was the only sound, until they heard some voices. Both men hunched low, trying to avoid being seen by anyone on the opposite side of the train. Then they heard a shot, and a man yelled:

"Stay right where yuh are, yuh fool!"

SPEEDY SMITH

"What's goin' on?" asked Tombstone anxiously.

"That order goes for us, too!" Speedy said. "Tombstone, mebbe this is a train robbery!"

"Yea-a-ah! I'm goin' to see what—"

TOMBSTONE raised to his feet just as two men came over the other side, traveling fast. There was no chance to avoid a collision. Speedy tried to straighten up, and only added to the generally disastrous results. They were both knocked off the steps, and all four men went into a pile against the rocky wall. Tombstone bumped his head sharply, and Speedy tried to kick himself loose from the dog pile. One man was cursing, flailing with both hands, while the other got loose and went out of there, running past the engine, but limping badly.

Then the other man, probably realizing his position, went out of there like a frightened coyote, leaving Tombstone and Speedy, dazed, bruised, and wondering what happened. The locomotive whistle cut loose a terrific blast, and began backing, the wheels spinning. It went past Tombstone and Speedy, rather leaving them in a cloud of steam.

Tombstone was on his feet, holding a large canvas sack in both hands, as the departing headlight picked them up beside the track. Speedy was going around in circles, looking for his hat, which he picked up and put on. It went

down over his eyes and he cuffed it back. "Lovely dove!" he blurted. "I hit so hard that I shrunk my head. What yuh got there, Tombstone?"

"I—I dunno," faltered the dazed Tombstone. "Huh! Sack. Where'd I git me a sack? Man, I've got a lump on my head! What happened?"

"Two men hit us," said Speedy painfully. "Look at me! My hat is two-three sizes too big! I've done shrunk. Wait! By golly, I must have traded hats with one of 'em!"

Tombstone lighted a match and looked at Speedy.

"I hope yuh got somethin' to boot," he said. "Yore'n was almost new."

"Wait a minute! We didn't have no sack, Tombstone. Wait'll I light a match."

Speedy lighted a match and Tombstone shoved a long hand and arm down into the canvas sack, bringing his hand out quickly, clutching a handful of currency, still banded. They both stared at it for a moment or two, then the fingers relaxed and the money fell back into the bag. The match flickered out, and they stood there silent.

FAR away a coyote's wailing broke the stillness. Then Speedy said huskily: "They robbed the train and we got the money!"

"Yeah, we got the money," whispered Tombstone. "Judgin' from the weight of it, we're richer than Illinois mud."

"But it ain't our money, Tombstone. It ain't our . . . Sa-a-ay! If they catch us with that money—"

"Mebbe they'd give us a reward."

"Yeah—thirty years at hard labor. We've got to hide it."

"Shore," agreed Tombstone. "We'll hide it where nobody'll know where it is but us."

They found a small culvert, shoved the sack under there and went on about a mile to another little station. Two men were on the station platform, so Tombstone and Speedy lurked in the dark until the passenger train came along. Evidently they had spent some time at the other little station, wiring in the report of the robbery. Tombstone and Speedy worked in close enough again to jump onto the blind-baggage, unseen, and headed again for Smoke Tree.

"Everythin' is all right, if it turns out right," remarked Tombston. "I've allus said that, Speedy."

"Yeah. But this deal ain't turned out—yet."

"What do yuh mean, Speedy?"

"I mean that one of them *pelicanos* got my hat—and inside my hat it says 'Speedy Smith'."

"What if it does? He got the best hat."

"Yuh knot-headed imbecile, he'd know that one of the men who got their loot was named Speedy Smith."

"Oh, yea-a-ah, I understand—now."

"I hope yuh do. Men who have got the nerve to rob a train—well, they wouldn't stop at killin' to git that money back."

"That's right. Well, all I can say, Speedy, is that I'm glad to have saw and knowed yuh. We've had good times together, and I'm sorry it's over. I suppose that after a few years I'll manage to forgit. It'll be hard, but I'll make it. If you ain't got nobody else in mind, I'd like to inherit them spurs of yores. A feller can allus use a extra pair of spurs."

"I ain't dead yet, yuh knot-head!" snorted Speedy.

"In the midst of life, prepare for death. I've allus said that. You can jist give me a little paper to that effect, with yore name signed to it. Saves argument. Lots of folks make out a will, even when the Grim Reaper is further away from them than he is from you."

"There's only one thing," said Speedy. "Yuh see, Tombstone, they don't know what yore name is, and they might think yuh're the Speedy Smith they're lookin' for."

"Huh? They can ask, can't they?"

"If they stop shootin' long enough."

"Yeah, I never thought of that, Speedy. We'll have to wait and see. It might not be as bad as I figgered."

"And another thing," remarked Speedy. "We're goin' to Smoke Tree and neither of us has got enough money to buy a bed."

"I never thought I'd see the time when I could lay my hands on a million dollars, and not have money enough to buy a piller for my head," sighed Tombstone.

The two masked men drove Tombstone and Speedy away from the main part of town, not pausing until they reached a grove of cottonwoods

CHAPTER II

Rich As Mud—And No Pillow

FROM what the partners could see of it at night, Smoke Tree was no metropolis. Sans warbag, sans money, they wandered down to the one hotel, where a whiskered old-timer hunched behind the little counter, darning a sock. They leaned on the counter and watched him.

"Hankerin' for a room?" he asked.

"We have a definite cravin' to find a bed upon which to lay the remains," replied Speedy. "Yore sign says that payment must be made in advance."

The hotel man glanced at the partly-faded sign and nodded.

"In darnin' a sock," advised Tombstone, "yuh ort to put an aig in there and darn over it. Thataway it keeps the thing smooth."

"Yeah?" The old man waxed indignant. "So yuh're another of them scientific people, huh? I tried it. Aig busted. Wasn't fresh either. Had to throw away my sock and my pants."

"Gettin' back to that room," reminded Speedy hopefully.

The old man yanked at the thread. "Four-bits—in advance."

"Pay yuh tomorrow, huh?" queried Tombstone.

"Where yuh goin' to git that four-bits tomorrow?"

"Fact is," replied Speedy rather vaguely, "there's prob'ly a letter in the postoffice for us right now."

"With money in it," added Tombstone.

"Come in tomorrow, boys. Wait a minute! Where-at is yore hosses and saddles?"

"In Sunset Wells," Speedy. "We didn't want to be bothered with 'em."

The old hotel-keeper considered this, as he examined what was probably the worst job of darning ever done on any sock. Then he said:

"Speakin of liars, I used to know a feller down in New Mexico, who was prob-ly the best I ever heard. Wait a minute! How about lettin' me have one of yore guns as collateral? They're prob'ly worth four-bits, at least."

"Let him have yores, Tombstone," said Speedy. "I'm liable to need mine."

Tombstone took the suggestion under consideration. Finally he said:

"Well, jist until we get four-bits, yuh understand. Without that gun, I feel awful naked. Take good care of it, mister."

"My name's Heppner. Bill C. Heppner."

"What's the C for?" asked Speedy.

"Careful. Yuh better sign the book."

Speedy wrote their names, and Bill C. Heppner squinted at the page before putting the book away under the counter.

"Smith and Jones, huh?" he grunted. As he reached for the key to the room, a man came in. "Howdy, Elmer," said Bill C. Heppner. "How's crime?"

Elmer Gibson, sheriff of Smoke Tree, was a big, raw-boned person, with a jaundiced eye and a sparse mustache. He looked Tombstone and Speedy over carefully, and moved in against the desk.

"Well, sir, it's gettin' more active every day," he replied. "Early tonight the passenger train was stuck up by two masked bandits, down near Silver Fork. They cut off the engine and baggage car, ran out a few miles and made the messenger open the safe. They got the pay roll of the Reynolds mine, and a lot of other things. At least, that's the report. Prob'ly amount to about sixty thousand dollars."

"Yuh don't say, Elmer!" marveled Heppner. "Got away, huh?"

Elmer looked balefully at Speedy.

"Yup—got away," he replied. "Tied up the fireman, and took the engineer back to the express car with 'em. But when the train crew started back to pick up the rest of the train, they seen them two bandits in the headlights. They said"—Elmer's eyes shifted to Tombstone Jones—"that one of them bandits was at least seven feet tall, and the other wasn't more'n half the size. They shore got a good look at 'em—and they still had that sack of loot in their hands."

"If yuh don't mind, Mr. Heppner," said Speedy, "we'll take the key up to the room. Were awful tired."

The sheriff watched them go up the stairs. At the top Speedy looked back.

"I don't like the expression in that

sheriff's eye," he said to Tombstone. "He was lookin' right at you when he spoke about one of them bandits bein' seven feet tall. When we git some money, yuh better buy a pair of low-heel shoes and leave yore hat off."

"Aw, we can prove we didn't stick up that train, Speedy."

"How can we? We was there."

THEY opened the door and went in. "Anybody with brains could look at us and know we're honest," Tombstone said.

"Anyone with brains wouldn't give us a second look, Tombstone."

"That's what I mean—they wouldn't need a second look."

"Well, if yuh're right, that sheriff ain't got brains, 'cause he never took his eyes off us. That *pelicano* worries me."

Down at the counter Elmer Gibson wanted to know more about them, but Bill C. Heppner didn't know anything to tell him.

"Elmer," he said, "I never seen 'em before in m' life. They ain't got a cent, I'll tell yuh that much. The tall one pawned his gun to me for their room tonight."

"No money, eh?" growled Elmer. "Pawned his six-gun, eh? Likely jist actin' broke. Bill, I suspect them two fellers."

"Yeah, I'm inclined to believe yuh do, Elmer. Some day somethin' is goin' to happen, and yore suspicions will be realized."

"I hope so," sighed Elmer. "Where are their horses?'

"In Sunset Wells."

"In. . .Wait a minute! Both had on spurs, too. Horses in Sunset Wells! They never walked here with spurs on, Bill. Now I *am* suspicious. Sa-a-ay! They must have come in on that train."

"Elmer," said Bill C. Heppner, leaning on the counter and lowering his voice almost to a whisper," did you ever darn a sock and not have bumps in it?"

Tombstone and Speedy went to the postoffice next morning, and were overjoyed to find a letter there from Jim Keaton. Enclosed were two fifty-dollar bills, and the note read:

Here is $100 in expense money. See Bill Francis, owner of the Circle F, and he will explain what he wants done. This is not an Association job, and you will be responsible to him.

"Only a hundred," sighed Tombstone. "No hosses, no saddles, no nothin'. Fine thing!"

"We can eat and sleep," said Speedy. "After all, that's quite a lot. We can git yore gun back, too."

"Yeah—that'll help a lot."

Bill C. Heppner gazed upon a fifty-dollar bill with suspicion, but Speedy said."

"We got the letter we was a-lookin' for."

"Yuh better wait until the bank opens," said Heppner. "I ain't had that much since Sittin' Bull stood up. I'll have to trust yuh for breakfast. Is that the smallest bill yuh got?"

"We ain't measured the others" — Tombstone grinned — "but we think they're the same general shape and size."

There was another man at the counter, a tall, lean, lantern-jawed individual, with a deputy's star on his sagging lapel.

"Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith," Heppner said, "I'd like to make yuh used to Kansas Colby. Kansas, meet the boys."

They shook hands solemnly. Shaking hands with "Kansas" was like accepting a dead fish.

"Strangers, huh?" he said.

"Jist like you are to us," said Speedy. "Well, we better eat."

"I'll go along," said Kansas. "I ain't et yet."

It was easy to see that Kansas Colby wanted to find out what he could from them. They sat down in the little hotel dining room, and gave their order to a tired-looking waitress.

"You boys came in last night, eh?" remarked Kansas. "Ride in?"

"Yeah."

"Uh-huh. Came in from Sunset Wells, huh?"

"Sunset Wells?" queried Tombstone. "I seem to have heard about a place like that. Does that name strike a cord in yore memory Speedy?"

"Not enough to make it *tung-g-g*."

"Heppner," Said Kansas, "said yuh left yore hosses in Sunset Wells."

"Oh, yuh mean the old feller in the hotel?"

"Yeah. He said—"

"Don't pay too much attention to him," advised Speedy. "Yuh know what?" Speedy lowered his voice and glanced around carefully. "He darns socks."

"No!" grunted Kansas.

"Yeah, with bulges," added Tombstone, shaking his head.

"I never knew that," said Kansas.

HAM AND eggs were brought, and they attacked their food with great relish.

"Kansas," Speedy said, "they tell me that yuh've got a prisoner in yore jail, charged with killin'."

"Oh, yeah—Johnny Francis. "Killed Ed McCall. Called him out of the dance hall and blasted him down."

"No extenuatin' circumstances?" asked Tombstone.

"What's that in English?" asked Kansas.

"Don't mind him, Kansas," advised Speedy. "One time he swallered a dictionary—and he burps that away."

"Oh, I jist wondered. Yuh see, Johnny and Ed had words over a girl, and Johnny told Ed to foller him outside and settle it. Ed finished the dance and came outside. Ed should have gone out the back door."

"No extenuatin' circumstances," said Tombstone sadly.

"Nobody seen it, if that's what yuh mean."

"That," replied Tombstone gravely, "extenuates a little."

"Yuh heard about the train robbery last night, didn't yuh?" asked Kansas.

"We heard the sheriff tellin' Heppner." Speedy nodded. "Must have made a cleanup."

"Got the pay roll of the Reynolds mine, for one thing. That's a hefty chunk in itself. The express company will send detectives, I reckon, and offer a good reward. I'd like to get it."

"How many men was in that gang?" asked Speedy.

"Two. They're described as one bein' about seven feet tall, and the other one much shorter."

"I can see it now," said Speedy. "Two bandits, tryin' to get away, and the engineer chasin' 'em with a tape measure."

"A-a-aw!" gulped Kansas. "He never did; he jist guessed."

Well, there ort to be a law against it," declared Speedy.

"Yuh mean, robbin' trains?"

"No—guessin' height. One thing, I'm glad we wasn't near Silver Fork last night, Tombstone."

"Yuh wasn't, huh?" queried Kansas sadly.

"Listen, Kansas," said Speedy, "Yuh've got to use judgement in things like this. How far is it to Silver Fork?"

"Oh, around fifty miles."

"That proves we wasn't there. Heppner can tell yuh what time we got here last night, and no danged man, no matter how fast he is, could come on foot from Silver Fork to Smoke Tree in that len'th of time."

"That's right,' agreed Kansas, "he couldn't."

Tombstone sighed with relief and added:

"Especially if he wore spurs."

CHAPTER III

Mildly Insultin'

THE sheriff, Elmer Gibson, wasn't exactly satisfied with Kansas Colby's report on Tombstone and Speedy.

"Did they tell you they walked all the way from Sunset Wells?" he said.

"With spurs, Elmer," added Kansas. "Good walkers, huh?"

"I just got a telegram from the express company, sayin' that a detective will be here late this afternoon to take over the case. I'll bet he'll find somethin' about 'em."

Speedy Smith wasn't exactly satisfied, either. He folded some pieces of newspaper and placed them inside the band of the hat he got at the scene of the robbery. It still didn't fit good.

"Every time I think about one of them hairpins gettin' away with my hat, I git goose-pimples," he told Tombstone. "Blame it all, that hat's got my name in it."

"Mebbe they can't read," said Tombstone. "Yuh got to figger on that angle, yuh know. Let's go down and talk with the sheriff. If we keep away from him, he might suspect us."

They found the sheriff talking with a big, raw-boned man, so they sat down on the high board sidewalk and waited. Kansas came along and sat down with them. He told them that the man was Bill Francis, who owned the Circle F.

"It's his son that's in jail," explained Kansas.

Another man came sauntering down the street and sat down with them.

"Red," Kansas said, "I'd like to have yuh meet Jones and Smith. Boys, this is Red Elkton, one of our most unsuccessful gamblers." "Red" Elkton was really red-headed, well-built, and with a good handshake. "Unsuccessful is right, Kansas," he said. "How's crime?"

"Improvin'. Yuh heard about the train robbery."

"Yeah—the lucky dogs."

"We'll get 'em," assured Kansas.

Red laughed. "You and Elmer couldn't find yore way down a railroad track," he declared.

"Yuh won't get 'em, settin' on the seat of yore pants," said Speedy. "They're prob'ly down in New Mexico by this time."

"That railroad detective will be in this afternoon," said Kansas. "He'll do somethin', y'betcha."

"Mebbe I ain't very bright," remarked Tombstone, "but what can a detective do *here*? After all, that robbery was at Silver Fork."

"Yuh might be surprised," said Kansas.

"Surprised at what?" queried Red.

Kansas shook his head. "I dunno, Red."

"I guess yuh don't, Kansas."

Two riders came into town, started to pull up at the hitchrack in front of the Signal Saloon, but saw the three men in front of the office, and reined over there. They were Jim Hawks, owner of the Bar H, and "Buck" Hawley, his lone employee. Hawks was nearing middle-age, and slightly gray, bow-legged and not too big. Hawley was big, dumb-looking cowpoke, with a slack jaw and inquiring eyes.

"Howdy, boys," drawled Hawks, dismounting.

"Hyah, Jim," said Kansas, and introduced Tombstone and Speedy.

They sat down to share the shade.

"I used to know a feller named Jones in Oklahomy," Hawks said. Favored you a little. First name was Cle-el-um. Cleelum Jones."

"Well, I'll be a sister to a sidewinder!" gasped Tombstone. "That was my uncle! We lost him several years ago. Cyclone came along, and uncle Cleelum never made it to the dug-out. We've been mournin' our lost ever since. Oklahoma, 'eh? Well, I'll say that he must have hung onto that twister awful tight."

"They robbed the train and we got the money," Speedy said huskily. "We're richer than Illionois mud!"

"He never told me about that," said Hawks. "Yuh see, I couldn't talk much Ponca, and he couldn't talk much English."

"That," remarked Speedy soberly," ort to make you stop bein' a claim-agent, Tombstone."

"Well," remarked Tombstone, "Uncle Cleelum was quite changeable, they tell me, but I don't reckon he'd go that far."

"Any news of the train robbers, Kansas?" asked Hawks.

"Not yet," replied the deputy. "We're a-workin' on the case pretty hard."

"How much did they get?"

"That ain't been determined, Jim."

"Are yuh right shore that there *was* a robbery?" asked Red.

"Yeah, I reckon so."

"Prob'ly over sixty thousand dollars," said Speedy. "Some folks are just born lucky. Imagine pickin' up that much money!"

"What'd you do if yuh had that much money?" asked Red.

"Do?" queried Speedy soberly. "I'd buy me a good fast hoss, and shuck loose from this country. I'd like to be somebody.".

"F'r instance—a train robber, eh?" queried Kansas.

"That'd do for a starter," said Speedy.

THE SHERIFF came from the office with Bill Francis, who went on up the street. After a few moments Tombstone and Speedy followed him up to the general store. They wanted to tell him who they were and that Jim Keaton had sent them.

Apparently Bill Francis was in a bad mood, as they heard him arguing with the store keeper.

They stayed outside, and heard Francis say:

"What chance has the kid got? They've convicted him without a trial, I tell yuh. Everybody is against him. All right, we'll find out about that. I'll have a good smart detective on the job soon. And I'll tell yuh this much—if the law don't turn him loose I'll kick down that two-by-four jail and take him out myself."

Francis came out, slammed the door, and met Tombstone and Speedy face to face. He glared at them, his fists opening and closing at his sides.

"What do you want?" he asked harshly.

"We," replied Tombstone quietly, "are the good,smart detectives yuh sent for."

Bill Francis opened his mouth, closed it tightly again, and swallowed painfully, as he looked them over.

"We are at yore disposal," added Speedy.

Bill Francis had difficulty with his speech, but finally said:

"Ain't it bad enough, without tryin' to be funny about it?"

"Like I jist said—we're good and smart," reminded Tombstone.

"Listen to me, you cowpoke comedians!" snapped Francis. "I'm tired of folks makin' fun of my troubles. Detectives! Smart! I'll bet yuh have trouble gettin' yore feet into the right boots."

Then Bill Francis strode past them, and headed for the hitchrack. Tombstone looked down at his boots and then over at the ones on Speedy's feet.

"He don't want help—he wants sympathy," said Speedy.

"Well, I'll say this," remarked Tombstone, "he's mildly insultin'. Cowpoke comedians!"

Speedy shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Like I've allus said," Tombstone said, "we ort to have badges."

"Yuh mean, like a sheriff wears?"

"Well, yeah, somethin' like that. Then we wouldn't have to explain who we are. It's embarassin', don'tcha know it. Cowpoke comedians! A badge would settle all that."

Speedy leaned against a post and looked moodily down the street.

"Yeah, mebbe a badge would help" he admitted. "You ort to pack yore family tree with yuh, too. Nephew to a Ponca Indian!"

"What I want to know is what right has a Ponca got to call himself Jones. It's misleadin'."

"It shore misled you, pardner."

They were sitting in front of the hotel that evening when two men came from the depot. One was a rather tall, gaunt person, with a gray mustache, while the other was short, thick of neck and wide of shoulder. They were both wearing store clothes. They went into the sheriff's office.

"I've got a notion we should send a telegram to Jim Keaton," Tombstone said.

"For what reason?" asked Speedy. "Want him to look up yore family tree?

Yuh might be a chief, or have some oil-land comin' to yuh."

"No, I jist wanted him to know that Jim Francis acted awful snooty toward our offer. Have trouble gettin' our feet into the right boots! That made me mad."

"Jim Keaton'd love that," sighed Speedy. "As a matter of fact, I don't blame Jim Francis. If yuh came up to me and said yuh are a detective I'd spurn yore claims."

"Even knowin' me as good as yuh do, Speedy?"

"Yeah."

"Uh-huh. Mebbe I don't look like a detective, but I've allus said that beauty is only skin deep."

"Nobody said anythin' about beauty. Let's go in and get somethin' to eat. I'm hongry."

They finished their meal and walked into the little hotel lobby. The sheriff, his deputy, and the two men who came from the depot were sitting in the lobby, and looked them over as they came in from the dining room. The man with the gray mustache spoke to the sheriff who got up, stretched himself, and came slowly over to the desk, where Tombstone and Speedy had stopped.

SUDDENLY, and without warning, the sheriff drew his gun and covered both of them. Kansas Colby walked around behind them and quietly removed their two guns from the holsters, while the two cowpokes looked at their captor in astonishment.

"What'sa idea?" asked Speedy curiously.

The other two men came up, looking them over.

"Those two are the same men I saw in the headlight of my engine," the man with the gray mustache said quietly. I'd know them anywhere."

"Who are you, pardner?" asked Tombstone.

"I'm the engineer on the train that was robbed."

"Oh, yeah," said Tombstone blankly. "My name's Jones."

"Yuh're wrong—it's mud," said Kansas. "Much obliged to yuh both for stayin' around. Start walkin'."

"You ain't puttin' us in jail, are yuh?" asked Tombstone.

"Where do you think we're puttin' yuh—in a bank? Get goin'."

"Aw, shucks, this can all be explained," pleaded Tombstone.

"That's fine. Next term of court we'll have a judge who loves to listen to explanations. Yuh can tell him all about it."

Speedy had nothing to say, but his mind was working fast. If they told where they had hidden the loot, nothing could have them.

There was no use making an appeal to Jim Keaton.

All he could say would be that they worked for him. Even a cattle detective could rob a train, if his inclinations ran to robbery.

CHAPTER IV

A Jail Full Of Innocence

THEY locked Tombstone and Speedy in the same cell, while Johnny Francis, in the adjoining cell, seemed to enjoy having company. After the four men went away, Tombstone whispered to Speedy:

"They'll be awful disappointed when I tell 'em what actually happened."

"If yuh open yore big mouth, we're sunk," whispered Speedy. "We can't prove we didn't do it."

"Gosh, I never thought of that. Why—uh—uh—huh, uh-huh. That's right. Speedy, we're in one awful fix."

"Given a little time, yuh can grasp things, Tombstone. Keep yore mouth shut."

"How about telegraphin' Jim Keaton for help?"

"He don't know we didn't rob that train."

"Heavenly days!" gasped Tombstone tragically. "He don't! Yuh see, I. . . Speedy, we're in one awful fix!"

"Yuh said that before."

Speedy looked over at Johnny Francis and said:

"Howdy, Pardner."

"Hyah." Johnny grinned. "What have you two done?"

"Oh, we're payin' the penalty for lookin' like somebody the engineer saw in his headlights. Yuh wouldn't believe it, but there must be two more that look like us in this world. Do they feed yuh

pretty good in this man's jail?"

"Just fair. Elmer and Kansas do all right, except when they get into a poker game and forget mealtime. My name's Johnny Francis."

"I'm Jones thisn's Smith," said Tombstone soberly.

"Yeah, I know. I heard 'em talking about you two in the office. That bull-necked person is a railroad detective."

"So that's what they look like," mused Tombstone. "Well, I'll say it didn't take him long to detect me and Speedy."

The sheriff and the detective came back to the cells.

"What'd you two do with the money you stole?" the detective said. "Don't lie. We've got you two ready for the penitentiary, and if you tell us where you hid the money, maybe we'll get a year or two off your sentence."

"How much does that leave us?" asked Speedy curiously.

"Enough to last you for a long time, young man."

"Well, a couple years won't make no difference. If yuh're so smart, why don'tcha find it yoreself? Or does the company have a good reason for not lettin' yuh hunt for buried treasure?"

The bull-neck detective flared, but managed to hold his temper.

"Bein' smart won't get you any place," he said tartly.

"That's why so few detectives ever went to school," said Speedy. "Well, mebbe ignorance pays. I dunno."

"Ignorance won't pay you anything, young man."

"I ain't lookin' for pay."

"You admit robbin' that express car."

"Yuh're crazy. We never admitted anythin'."

"Well, the engineer's identification is positive. You cashed two fifty-dollar bills at the bank. Where did you get them?"

"They was sent to us," declared Tombstone.

"By Santa Claus, I presume."

"You answer it, Speedy," said Tombstone. "I'm beginnin' to get sore at that big-mouthed rannahan. He irks me."

"Yuh ain't goin' to get anythin' out of them two." said the sheriff. "Leave 'em in this hot jail for a couple of days, and they will be ready and willin' to confess."

"I'll say they will," remarked Johnny Francis. "They don't have to be guilty to do that. I've been here ten days, and I've confessed to killin' Cock Robin five times."

"Another smart prisoner, eh?" grunted the detective. "Sheriff, you seem to get all the wise ones."

"It's a chore," sighed the sheriff.

They went back to the office, and Kansas Colby came in.

"How are all m' little playmates?" asked Kansas jovially.

"Do yuh have to entertain us with that silly smile?" asked Tombstone. "Why didn'tcha go out and find the two men who robbed the train?"

"And the man who shot Dell McCall?" added Johnny soberly.

"It's shore mighty nice, havin' so many innocent men in our little jail-house," said Kansas soberly. "It makes yuh feel that a jail ain't such a bad place, after all. Tombstone, as long as you two was dumb enough to stay around here, why didn't yuh tip me off to what yuh are? I could have collected that re-ward. Now, that engineer will prob'ly git it."

"Couldn't yuh tell, by lookin' at us?" asked Speedy.

"Well, I did suspect yuh—kinda. But yore type runs more to stealin' hosses than robbin' trains."

TOMBSTONE straightened up to his full seven feet.

"Kansas," he declared soberly, "as soon as we're both turned loose as innocent, I'm goin' to poke yore long nose for that remark."

"By the time yuh're turned loose, Tombstone, we're both goin' to be too danged old to even argue, and as far as that goes, I don't believe yuh could do it, even right now."

"Unlock this cell door and I'll show yuh, Kansas."

"Go ahead, Kansas," urged Johnny," "I'd like to see yuh get a good sock on the nose."

"Aw, no! Yuh're tryin' to get loose. Can't fool me."

"Well, go away then," said Johnny. "Ain't it bad enough to have be in jail, without havin' you around to add insult to injury?"

Kansas went away grinning.

"Kansas is all right—he's human," Johnny said.

Tombstone lowered his voice, as he said:

"Johnny, we was sent here by the Cattlemen's Association to help prove yuh didn't shoot that feller."

Johnny gripped the bars in both hands, as he stared at Tombstone.

"You—uh—wait a minute! Don't they want me to get loose?"

"I reckon yore father felt the same way about it," said Speedy.

"My father?"

"We told him who we are," said Tombstone.

"Wait a minute," said Johnny. "My father said he had sent for a first-class detective."

"We're him," said Tombstone soberly. "Good and smart."

"Good glory!" whispered Johnny piously. "Good and smart! And yuh're in jail for robbin' a train."

"Yeah—it don't add up," admitted Speedy.

"I'll say it don't. And the Association sent *you*. What's wrong with the Association, anyway?"

"Us," admitted Speedy seriously.

"Aw, I didn't exactly mean that, Smith. Shucks, none of us are perfect."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Johnny," said Tombstone.

"Why are yuh sorry?"

"It kinda makes me doubt myself. Now, let's talk about you."

"About me?"

"Yeah. We came here to try and save yuh, kid."

Johnny thought it over for a while, but finally said:

"What's the use of talkin'? Yuh can't do anythin', even if yuh had brains enough to help me. Can't anybody help me. I'm stuck."

"Yuh didn't shoot that feller, huh?" asked Tombstone.

Johnny shook his head slowly. "I did not. It started over nothin' much."

"Woman?" asked Speedy.

"Well, yeah. I was dancin' with a girl. . . "Johnny stared at the floor, as though visualizing the incident. "Yuh see, McCall said she had promised him that dance, but I knew better. She didn't like McCall. I had the same kind of an argument with Red Elkton not over thirty minutes before, but Red backed out. McCall had been drinkin'. He danced with another girl, and he kicked me on the ankle. Made a dirty remark. We stopped and I said, 'This is no place to start trouble, Dell. Meet me outside after the dance."

"And he met yuh?" asked Tombstone.

"I never saw him again—alive. I waited a while, but decided that he wasn't comin' out. I walked down the street, kinda coolin' off, and I heard a shot. When I got back there, McCall was dead. But, don't yuh see, I can't prove a thing."

"Nobody saw yuh shoot him, huh?"

"They couldn't. I didn't shoot him."

"Oh, yeah, that's right. Did the sheriff smell into the end of yore gun, to see if it had gone off lately?"

"I didn't have any gun on me. They said I threw it away, or hid it."

"Prob'ly hid it," mused Tombstone. "Be foolish to jist throw it away, 'cause somebody would find it."

"I never had any gun!" snapped Johnny in disgust.

"Oh, yeah, that's right."

NO LIGHT was in the jail. Kansas came in, looked them over and locked the corridor door.

"I sleep in the office," he said. "If you boys want any advice, yuh can call me."

[*Turn page*]

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"How about a little advice right now?" asked Speedy.

"Advice on what?"

"The way to get out of this blamed cage."

"That's yore problem." Kansas grinned. I read in a book one time how they overpowered the jailer, got his keys and locked him in his own jail. Yuh might try it."

"You've planted a seed, pardner," said Tombstone soberly. "It might work, at that. Pleasant dreams."

The cots were hard in that jail, and so short that about a foot of Tombstone Jones hung over the end.

Tombstone complained, and Johnny chuckled.

"Funny, huh?" grunted Tombstone.

"It will be, pardner. Court don't open for a month."

CHAPTER V

Kidnaped From The Calaboose

ALL of them in the jail were asleep when something awakened Tombstone. There were sounds in the sheriff's office, but he was unable to hear any conversation. After a minute or two he heard footsteps in the corridor and someone was fumbling with the lock on the barred door.

"Mebbe that ain't the key," a voice whispered huskily.

But it was the key, and Tombstone heard the door creak open.

"Yuh better get that lamp," the same husky voice whispered. "We've got to have light."

"What's goin' on?" asked Speedy, whispering himself.

"Quien sabe?" replied Tombstone.

The lamp was lighted, and they could see two masked men, guns in hand, looking around.

"Yuh better go in with Johnny," Tombstone said. "This cell's full, gents."

The two men came over and peered through the bars.

"Git yore clothes on," one said. "Yuh're goin' with us."

"Yuh mean yuh're turnin' us loose?" asked Tombstone.

"We're takin' yuh out of jail, if that means anythin' to yuh."

"Even bein' outside is worth somethin'," said Tombstone, pulling on his boots.

They unlocked the cell door.

"C'mon out and face the bars," one said. "No foolin', boys. Put yore hands behind yuh."

A cocked six-shooter is a great persuader, and they obeyed. With the wrist-tieing finished they produced some extra bandannas and proceeded to gag them.

"Why not take me along?" Johnny said. "Even a gag is better than this."

"Sorry, but you ain't no use to us, feller."

One of them got a sudden idea.

"Let's lock that deputy in his own cell," he said. "We've got his keys and that bunch from the desk. They'll have to blast him out."

The other approved the idea and they dragged Kansas Colby in and shut the cell door on him. Kansas was unconscious from a blow on the head.

"Just like Kansas read it," declared Johnny.

"What are you talkin' about, feller?" asked one of the men.

"You wouldn't understand," Johnny said.

"There's a back door," said one of the men," and we must have the key to it. All right, you two dummies, start walkin'. . . .

Elmer Gibson, the sheriff, deep in the needed concentration, in order to make a bob-tail flush beat a full house, looked up from the poker table and saw the depot agent standing beside him.

"This telegram must have been filed late," the agent said. "It just came, Sheriff."

Elmer Gibson grunted, accepted the telegram, and proceeded to saw off the limb between himself and twelve dollars. Then he opened the telegram and read:

TOMBSTONE JONES AND SPEEDY SMITH WORK FOR THE ASSOCIATION. JUST CLEANED UP A BAD BUNCH AT THIS TOWN. TELEGRAPH AGENT HERE SAYS THEY GOT WIRE FROM ASSOCIATION TELLING THEM TO GO TO SMOKE TREE. THEY SOLD HORSES AND SADDLES HERE. NO FURTHER INFORMATION.

HANK ADAMS, SHERIFF

Elmer scowled thoughtfully. Something must be wrong. The Association

would not hire men like those two as detectives.

"Deal me out," he said. "I'll cash in later."

"Cash in what?" asked one of the players.

"Oh, yeah. I reckon I was upset."

Elmer left the saloon and headed for the office. He wanted to question Tombstone and Speedy again. He had wired the sheriff at Sunset Wells for information, and the reply was not too reassuring.

He hammered on the front door of the office and yelled Kansas' name, but there was no reply. He had left his keys on the desk, and the front door was securely locked.

Elmer Gibson was mad. Fine thing. He had trusted Kansas to stay in the office, but here was the blasted fool, gone some place. He's sure tell Kansas a few things.

HE went around the jail, intending to knock on the door, but found it open. Elmer Gibson didn't like that idea. Had Kansas forgotten to lock that door, or had something happened? Elmer went in carefully and was feeling his way along, when Johnny's voice stopped him short.

"Did yuh came back after me, or are yuh filled up?" Johnny said.

"Johnny, is that you?" asked the sheriff.

"Oh, it's you," sighed Johnny.

"Yeah, it's me! Where's Kansas?"

"Yuh'd be surprised," said Johnny.

"I wouldnt be surprised at him for anythin'. Left the back door open and . . . Where is he?"

"Don't kick over that lamp, Elmer. It's there by the cell door. Better light it and look around."

The sheriff found the lamp and lighted it. Then he lifted the lamp, leaned in close to the bars and peered into the cell.

"Kansas!" he yelped. "Kansas! Why you . . . He-e-ey! He's got some blood on his face!"

He whirled and looked at Johnny. "What happened? Where's Jones and Smith?"

"I reckon they left the back door open, Elmer."

"Yuh mean they—how'd they . . . Wait! Kansas has been hurt! I'll get a doctor. You stay right there and—"

Elmer ran out the back doorway and headed for the doctor.

"Yeah, I'll stay here," said Johnny grimly. "Yuh can shore depend on me."

It was several minutes before the sheriff came back, bringing Dr. Milton Gregg, short, bald-headed and slightly near-sighted. Doc had been routed out of bed, and was wearing his pants over his nightgown, with most of it hanging over the back of his pants. The sheriff pointed at the cell.

"Right in there, Doc," he said. "Wait a minute. I forgot the keys."

"How are yuh, Doc?" asked Johnny. Dr. Gregg peered at the cell. "Oh, yes, it is Johnny Francis. How is your father, Johnny?"

Johnny didn't bother to answer, because the sheriff was coming back, swearing angrily. His keys were gone.

"I forgot to tell yuh, Elmer—they took your keys, along with the ones Kansas had," Johnny said.

"Who took them—Jones and Smith?"

"No, no—the masked men. They took Jones and Smith, too."

ELMER Gibson leaned against the bars and swallowed painfully.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the doctor. "Open the cell, Elmer."

"I—I can't," whispered the sheriff. "No keys, Doc."

"What's goin' on?" asked Kansas painfully. He was sitting up on the cot, holding his head in both hands.

"You've been hurt, Kansas," said the sheriff.

"I can feel that! But . . . Huh! I remember now!"

"He's conscious," said the doctor blankly.

"If he is, it's the first time in his life," remarked Johnny.

"What happened to yuh, Kansas?" asked the sheriff.

"Somebody knocked on the door," explained Kansas painfully.

"And you stuck yore head out," added Johnny.

"How do you know?" snapped the sheriff angrily.

"He's half-turtle," said Johnny. "Ask him if I ain't right."

"I looked out," corrected Kansas. "What happened? Why am I in this cell? I don't remember . . . Wait a minute! Jones and Smith! Where-at are they, Elmer?"

"They're gone, and locked you in the cell."

"I knowed it! I knowed it! They said—"

"They didn't say," interrupted Johnny. "You told 'em what yuh read in a story about a man overcomin' the deputy sheriff and lockin' him in a cell. Two masked men hit yuh and locked yuh in that cell—and my friend, yuh'll be there for a while, 'cause they took both keys."

"Come close to the bars and I shall look at your head," suggested the doctor.

"Look at it from where yuh are," replied Kansas.

"Possibly doesn't recognize me," whispered the doctor. "Kansas, this is Doctor Gregg."

"I know it," sighed Kansas. "Elmer! How hard does a man have to get hit, before somebody gives him a drink?"

"I'll get some water," said the sheriff.

"I ain't dirty!" yelled Kansas. "I want somethin' to drink."

"I would as soon be in an insane asylum," declared the doctor.

"Lookin' at yuh from the rear, Doc, I think yuh came from one," said Johnny.

"Where'd Elmer go?" Kansas said.

He went to get you a drink. Do you feel any pain, Kansas?"

"I don't feel nothin'. I'm jist numb."

"Yuh shore recovered fast," said Johnny. "Yuh've been numb all yore life."

SHERIFF Gibson came back with some whisky in a glass. At least, there had been some when he started. He handed it to Kansas, who looked at the glass in amazement.

"Pour it down, Kansas," said the sheriff. "It'll make yuh feel better."

Kansas smashed the glass against the bars and sat down, disgusted.

"Better put a muzzle on him, Elmer," Johnny said. "He's liable to eat that glass."

"Let me get this all straight," begged the sheriff. "Two masked men hit Kansas over the head took Jones an Smdith out, and locked Kansas in the cell. Why?"

"Yuh're all right, except that last, Elmer. Don't ask me why."

"Did they go willin'ly?"

"With a forty-five in their ribs? Of course they went."

"Prisoners, eh? It don't make sense."

"What does, around here?" asked the doctor, trying to tuck his shirt-tail in, leaving enough to stick out straight, like a tail. "Kansas, will you let me look at your head?"

"No! Yuh act like I'm a freak."

Johnny whooped with glee. "Go ahead, Doc. Say what yuh're thinkin'."

"I—I am unable to think, Johnny. Elmer, if you don't need my services, I shall go back to bed."

"Don't yuh need a doctor, Kansas?" asked Elmer.

"No, I don't, blast it! What I need is a saw or some dynamite."

"Yuh'll have to stay there tonight, Kansas."

"Well, git out and let me sleep. My head aches."

"Wait a minute," said the sheriff, and read that telegram aloud.

"They told me they were detectives," Johnny said. "My dad sent for a detective to work on my case, and they are what he got."

"Well," said the sheriff, "I don't know what to do. Johnny, could yuh identify those men if yuh saw 'em again?"

"Shore. They both wore blue masks."

"C'mon, Doc. A few more minutes of this, and I'll be crazy, too. I've got to send a telegram to the Association."

CHAPTER VI

Spurs Can Help

IN the meantime, the two masked men had driven Tombstone and Speedy some way from the main part of town, halting them in the deep shadows of a grove of cottonwoods, where they had four horses tied to a fence. It was difficult for them to get their two prisoners on the horses, with their hands tied behind them. They discussed the feasibility of tying their feet under the belly of their mounts.

They can't make a break," one man said, "I"ll lead the front hoss, and we'll keep the other one ahead of you. Without reins, they can't do a thing."

They strung out in single-file, traveling in the dark. Tombstone was riding

a half-broken horse, which gave them considerable trouble.

It was too dark for them to get any idea of where they went, but it was mostly over a narrow trail in the brush. There was no conversation, as they began climbing. It seemed that they went almost to the top of the world, where they traveled along a narrow hogback ridge, which went up and down with great regularity. These two men seemed to be bent on taking their captives a long way from human habitation.

They topped a high spot, and the leader called back:

"Take it easy goin' down here. It's mighty narrow."

Tombstone stiffened in his saddle. These men seemed in dead earnest, and Tombstone realized that they were not being taken on any picnic. He and Speedy still wore their spurs. They started down the narrow hogback. Tombstone's horse pulled back, possibly afraid of the trail, and the leader yanked sharply on the lead-rope.

At the same moment Tombstone made his gamble. He drove his spurs into that half-broken bronco, leaned sharply forward and let out a blood-curdling yell. The animal leaped ahead wildly, crashed into the rump of the lead animal, lunged sideward and went off the top.

Tombstone left the yank of the rope which was luckily on his left side, as his animal went into space. The rope snapped, but he was sure that it had served to upset all their captors' plans, and a moment later they crashed into a bush. Tombstone was riding as he had never ridden before, trying to keep his balance.

It seemed as though his horse was making jumps of fifty feet, bouncing like a football. Then he felt himself leave the saddle, dropping into space, only to crash abruptly into brush which removed a lot of his clothes, plus considerable hide, and he came to a stop in more brush, flat on his back.

Tombstone lay perfectly still for a long time. He could hear voices, but they seemed far away. He wondered how many legs and arms had been broken in that trip, but felt no pain. Gradually he began testing himself, and found that his legs were all right. He couldn't tell much about his arms, because they were cramped behind him. After a while he eased up to a sitting position and began trying to take stock of his position. It was too dark to make any startling discoveries.

Carefully testing his fingers and wrists he discovered that there was a little play in that knotted rope. The knot in the dry rope had slipped a little, and he managed to work it loose enough to get his two hands free. He lost some skin in the operation, but it was successful.

He was free again, but Tombstone was too wise to try and get out of there, without knowing just what he was up against. No horse, no gun, and a possibility that any foolish move on his part might drop him into a bottomless canyon. He moved slowly around until he was stretched out on the steep side-hill, dug the makings of a cigarette out of his pocket, and proceeded to make himself comfortable.

Speedy heard the commotion ahead, but it was too dark for him to see what was going on. He heard Tombstone's yell, and the crash as both horses went off the ridge, but his own horse, jerking back, almost went off with them.

"What's wrong?" the man behind him was yelling. "What's happened up there?"

"Yuh beter look," called Speedy who had worked his gag loose. "They're both gone."

The man, unable to ride past Speedy's horse, dismounted and came on, moving slowly.

"Don't try anythin'," he said. "I'm comin' past yuh, and if yuh make one fool move—"

"Act yore age!" snorted Speedy. "What can I do?"

"Well, jist don't," warned the man.

He managed to get past Speedy's horse, disappearing in the darkness, calling to his partner, but not by name. Speedy knew it would be impossible for him to turn his horse around, so he slid both feet from his stirrups, took a long chance and slid off. His heels caught in the dirt, and he promptly sat down.

LUCKILY he had been riding a gentle horse. After a few moments he was able to get to his feet. With his back against the horse, he worked his way sideward, until he was behind the animal, then he walked quick back to the rear horse.

The ridge was a little wider here, and

he managed to get past. The man was still down there, calling and swearing when Speedy reached the top of the rise, where the ridge widened. Evidently the man had discovered his loss, because he really broke into profanity.

"I'll find yuh and shoot yore heart out!" he declared. "Yuh can't get away from me!"

Speedy moved off to one side, careful to not make a noise, and sat down in the brush. The man came to the top of the rise, panting his threats. He stood there and told the world what he would do, but realized the futility of his threats, and went back to his horse. A little later Speedy heard him, cursing the loose horse, as he tried to drive it forward over the narrow hogback.

The sounds died away in the distance. On the opposite ridge a coyote yapped dismally. Speedy sighed deeply and wondered what happened to Tombstone Jones.

"It kinda looks like they've done busted the set," he finally thought sadly, and relaxed to wait for daylight, when he might work out some scheme to get his hands loose.

As the first streaks of daylight were flung across the hills, Tombstone Jones examined his position. There was no sign of his horse. He shuddered a little, as he realized that if he had been thrown ten feet further, nothing could have saved him. That old manzanita bush had not only broken his fall, but it had saved him from the depths of a broken ravine.

Carefully he got to his feet and began moving parallel to his position, seeking a series of broken rocks fifty feet away. He was unable to climb back to the ridge, where he had gone over. In a tangle of broken rocks and brush he found the body of a man, his mask still around his neck. Tombstone squatted and looked the man over carefully.

"Red Elkton!" he whipered. "Yore luck ran out. Oh-oh!"

Protruding from a torn place in Red Elkton's overall leg was the barrel of a six-shooter. Tombstone tore it loose and sat there, looking at his own gun. Evidently Elkton had taken it from the sheriff's desk. It was a good gun, too.

Elkton's holster was empty, but his belt was well filled with hells. Tombstone took a handful and put them in his pocket. Elkton had been carrying the extra six-shooter inside the waistband of his overalls, but in the long fall it had slipped down and torn through the cloth.

Tombstone put the loaded gun in his holster, and was trying to determine the best place to start his climb back to the top of the ridge when he heard voices. He was unable to see anyone, due to the tall brush and rocks, and he was too far away to hear what was said.

Speedy had made a bad mistake in not thinking that those men would come back. He was examining the place, where Tombstone had gone off the ridge, when a voice snapped:

"Keep yore hands where they are!"

"Aw, don't be funny!" growled the discomfited Speedy, his hands still bound behind him. He tried to turn around and face the two masked men, his feet slipped and he sat down heavily, his hat jerking down over his eyes. One of the men laughed harshly.

They came forward and one of them jerked Speedy's hat back.

"Where's Jones?" asked the man.

"I think he's gone after the sheriff."

"Yea-a-ah? And left you tied up thataway?"

"He don't trust me any more than you do."

"Stop yappin' with him," growled the other man. "We've got to get him out of here. The next thing we know, that blasted sheriff will have a posse in the hills."

"How'll we take him?"

"Make him walk."

"Listen to reason," begged Speedy. "I can't go any place with my hands behind me. I'll break my fool neck. I fell down a while ago and almost didn't get up again."

"Tie 'em in front," ordered the man. "He can't get away."

The man changed the bonds and Speedy sighed with relief. His arms were sore and cramped from that unnatural position. They forced him to precede them along the ridge to their concealed horses, where one of them put a rope around his neck and ordered him to walk ahead of them.

"You *pelicanos* shore ain't takin' no chances," said Speedy.

"We already took one too many," replied the man. "Get goin'. . . ."

IT was a tough climb for Tombstone, but he finally sprawled across the narrow ridge, knees and elbows badly scraped. He was one mass of aches, but thankful to be alive. He sat there, squinting in the sunlight, looking up along the ridge, and far away he saw the two riders and a walking figure silhouetted against the sky, as they proceeded down a side ridge, evidently heading into the valley.

Tombstone managed to get to his feet, stumbled a little, but headed in that direction.

"I don't know where I'm goin' nor why," he told the world, "but I've got to play out the string. Speedy'd do that for me, and crab about it the rest of his life. . . ."

Kansas Colby was quite unhappy. Word had been spread of his predicament, and it embarrassed Kansas. The blacksmith was in the jail. In fact, he had been there for an hour, trying to help Kansas get out of the cell. The steel bars had turned all their saws, and it was impossible to bend them.

Elmer Gibson, the sheriff, came in, bringing a telegram. It was from Jim Keaton, and said:

SHERIFF AT SUNSET WELLS WIRED ME THAT YOU HAVE JONES AND SMITH IN JAIL CHARGED WITH TRAIN ROBBERY. THEY WORK FOR THE ASSOCIATION. WILL ARRIVE YOUR TOWN THURSDAY.

Elmer read it through the bars.

"Mebbe he'll know how to git me loose," Kansas said.

"Why worry about gettin' him loose?" asked Johnny Francis. "He ain't no help to yuh, Elmer. Why don't yuh quit botherin' with him and go find Tombstone and Speedy? After all, they're more important to you than Kansas."

"I cain't do a blamed thing," confessed the blacksmith.

"Am I goin' to have to live here all m' life?" wailed Kansas.

"Thursday mornin'?" queried the sheriff. "Why, that's this mornin'. Jim Keaton will arrive this morning'!"

"What am I supposed to do—cheer?" asked Kansas.

"We could use dynamite," said the blacksmith. "Jist enough to bend them bars."

"And kill Kansas?" queried the sheriff.

"Well, yeah, I—well, mebbe it'd only wound him. I dunno. But I'll bet we could get at the re-mains, if he succumbed."

"Get some," urged Johnny. "I'd like that."

"Forget it, Slim," said the sheriff. "We'll figger out somethin' better than dynamite."

"Figger out how to fine Tombstone and Speedy," said Johnny.

"Stop yappin'!" snorted the sheriff. "I'm tired of yore remarks, Johnny."

"All right, why don'tcha send me out of here? Make me go out on the street."

CHAPTER VII

Fine Cooperation

THE railroad detective, Devlin, came into the jail. He had heard of the escape and was all set to blame the sheriff's office. He leaned against the wall and looked the situation over grimly.

"Ol' Sherlock himself," said Johnny.

"Oh, hyah, Mr. Devlin," said the sheriff. "Bad, ain't it?"

"Bad enough, Sheriff. You lost our prisoners, eh?"

"They was taken out by force. Two masked men. They knocked Kansas on the head and locked him in the cell. Now, we can't get Kansas out."

"I see. What's being done about the missin' prisoners?"

"Well, uh—nothin', Mr. Devlin."

"That makes it fine. Good cooperation."

"Glad yuh like it," said Johnny drily. "Long about tonight, I expect 'em to come back and take me out. After which, I hope, they'll lock the sheriff in my little cell."

"Johnny, if you don't shut up—" warned the sheriff.

"Let's stop bickering," suggested the detective. "How about making an effort to find Jones and Smith? After all—"

"Yeah," admitted the sheriff, "we ort to do somethin'."

"What would you suggest?" asked Devlin curiously.

"Well, we could get some hosses and kinda look around."

"Anything is better than doing nothing. Get the horses."

"Kansas," said the sheriff, "will you go and . . . I forgot. I'll get hosses. Will you go along, Mr. Devlin?"

"I certainly will."

The sheriff went out.

"For once in m' life I don't have to be a valet to a saddle hoss," Kansas said.

The sheriff brought two saddled horses from his stable, and ran into Jim Keaton in front of the office. He had never met the secretary of the Association, but Jim Keaton introduced himself.

"You got my wire, Sheriff?" he asked.

"Yeah. I—I was expectin' yuh. This is a funny deal."

"With Tombstone and Speedy mixed up in it, it must have some funny aspect. What happened?"

In a few words the sheriff explained. Keaton, in his younger days, had ridden the ranges, and knew the desert hills well.

"Get me a horse," he said. "I'll ride with you, Sheriff."

"Do yuh think they're guilty of train robbery, Mr. Keaton?"

"No! Neither of them are smart enough to rob a train. Get me a horse and saddle."

The sheriff hurried over to the livery stable, and Keaton went back into the jail. Devlin was leaning against the wall, smoking a cigar. The blacksmith sat on his tool-box, studying the steel bars, his pipe hanging from a corner of his mouth.

"How are yuh, Devlin?" said Jim Keaton.

"You got here, eh?" Devil smiled. "I heard the sheriff got a telegram, saying that you would arrive this morning."

Jim Keaton nodded. "You're working the case for the express company, eh?"

"Yes. Keaton, is the supply of good men so scarce that you have to hire a pair of half-wits like Jones and Smith?"

"I resent that, Devlin."

"What part of it?" asked Devlin quietly.

"Overstating their mentality," replied Keaton drily. "That's exactly why I know they didn't rob that train, Devlin."

"The engineer absolutely identified them."

"All right—what if he did? Why did two masked men take them out of here at the point of a gun?"

"Trying to force them to tell where they hid the swag."

"I could use you, Devlin," said Keaton quietly. "You'd work fine with Tombstone and Speedy." He went over to Johnny's cell and said, "You are Johnny Frances, I reckon. Fine. Did your Father get in touch with Tombstone and Speedy?"

Johnny grinned. "Yeah, I reckon so, Mr. Keaton, and Dad told them that they didn't have brains enough to get their boots on the right feet."

The sheriff came hurrying in.

"All set, boys," he said. "Let's get goin'."

KEATON and Devlin went out with him, and rode away.

"Aw, shucks, this make me sore," Kansas said. "Slim, go home! Admit that yuh can't get me out, and be done with it. Settin' there, lookin' at them bars, like they was somethin' yuh invented yoreself."

Slim picked up his tool-box. Kansas leaned heavily against the cell door, which swung open, and Kansas fell full-length into the corridor. The door wasn't locked. He sat up, looking blankly around. Johnny whooped with mirth.

"I didn't think it was locked," choked Johnny. "Last night, when they locked yuh in, I never heard that door click."

"And yuh didn't tell anybody!" snorted Kansas. "Johnny, I'll never forgive yuh."

"Me wastin' all my time!" snorted the blacksmith, and went out. . . .

Speedy Smith was having a bad morning. For over an hour he kept ahead of the horses, gritting his teeth over blistered feet and sore muscles. He could feel the blood in his boots, but he said nothing. The rope around his neck had left a red necklace, and he was at the point of collapse when they came down through the brush and into the yard of a tumble-down ranchhouse.

The two men tied their horses under a cottonwood tree, and prodded Speedy into the house ahead of them. They let him sprawl into an old chair, and one of the men quickly tied his ankles together.

"Yuh dont need to do that," groaned

Speedy. "I couldn't run two steps, if yuh turned me loose."

The two men had a drink from a bottle, and one of them began building a fire in the fireplace. Outside the temperature must have been well over a hundred in th shade.

"Ain't it hot enough without a fire?" asked Speedy.

One of the men took a length of iron rod off the wall and shoved one end into the fire. He turned to Speedy and grinned.

"When we start askin' questions," he explained, "we want the right answers, and a hot iron on the skin brings out the truth in a man awful quick."

Speedy knew that they intended forcing him to tell where he and Tombstone had hidden the loot from the express car.

"I ain't got nothin' to conceal," he said.

"Yuh ain't, eh? That's fine." He sat down on the edge of a chair near Speedy and went on: "I happened to git yore hat, when we fell over yuh on that blind-baggage steps. The engineer saw yuh both in the light of his engine, holdin' our sack of money. Even the law knows that yuh got the money. How about it?"

"Yuh're tellin' it all to me," sighed Speedy. "Go ahead and tell me what was done with that money."

"We never got it agin!"

"Yuh didn't?" asked Speedy in amazement. "Well, who did?" The other man moved in close, looking down at Speedy.

The other man moved in close, looking down at Speedy.

"What are yuh talkin' about?" he asked huskily.

"We got the money all right, but we didn't know what it was all about. The train pulled out, and we're standin' there, when a man came over the side of the cut and stuck us up. He took the money away from us, and we thought it was the same man who dropped it."

Speedy's lie struck them with considerable force, because it sounded like the truth—to them. They looked at each other, and one of them walked the length of the room before he came back.

"What'd he look like?" asked the man.

"It was pretty dark out there and I—mebbe he was masked. We wasn't shore."

The two men looked at each other.

"If he wasn't dead already, I'd shoot his gizzard out," one said.

"We ain't shore he is. Mebbe he wanted it all for himself."

"Na-a-aw! He went into that canyon. Smith, yuh're lyin'. There wasn't another man."

"What became of my pardner?" asked Speedy.

"He's down in that canyon—dead. The blasted fool tried to get away and his hoss went over the edge. He took one of our gang along, too."

"Oh!" said Speedy, realizing the truth of the statement.

"Did yuh—uh—find him?" he asked.

"We ain't looked—yet. Mebbe we won't."

"Yuh better," said Speedy.

"Why had we better look?"

SPEEDY shut his lips tightly. One of the men went over to the fire and took out the iron, one end of which was red-hot. Coming back, he held the hot iron close to Speedy's eyes. The little cowpoke jerked back quickly, and the man laughed.

"Why had we better look?" he asked harshly.

"Because yuh won't find him," replied Speedy defiantly.

"Blast yore hide, what do yuh mean, Smith?"

"Put that iron away, yuh fool!" snapped Speedy. "The next thing yuh know the law will be here."

"Law?" queried one of them, and they both laughed, but without mirth.

Speedy was bluffing as hard as he could, but inside he felt that Tombstone was dead.

One of the men spat on the hot iron, and it fairly cracked. He moved in close, and grabbed Speedy's right ear.

"You little runt—talk fast!" he snapped. "We're through listenin' to yore lies. If yuh don't start—"

A clattering sound on the rickety porch caused both men to move quickly aside. The hot iron dropped to the floor, sending up smoke from the edge of a coyote-skin rug.

"Hawks, this is the sheriff!" a voice called.

"Look out!" hissed one of the men, and the unlocked door was shoved open.

CHAPTER VIII

"Feet, Don't Quit On Me—Yet'

JIM Keaton, the sheriff, and Frank Delaney walked in.

"Stick 'em up!" one of the masked men yelled. "Quick! Everybody get their hands up!"

The new arrivals had no alternative, under the muzzles of two guns. The three men blinked foolishly. Keaton's eyes shifted to Speedy, who had tears in his eyes, but he grinned at Jim Keaton.

"What's the meanin' of this?" asked the sheriff hoarsely.

"You do the guessin'," said one of the men.

"Take off yore mask, Jim," the sheriff said. "I'd know yore voice anywhere."

Hawks swept the mask off his face, leering at the sheriff.

"I asked yuh what this all means, Hawks?" said the sheriff.

"That's for you to find out, Gibson. Why did you come here?"

"Well, in the first place, we came to get yore help in findin' Jones and Smith. Yuh seem to have Smith."

"You tell us, Speedy," requested Keaton calmly.

"You open yore big mouth and I'll shut it," declared Hawks.

"I'm just wondering about something," said Keaton.

"Who are you?" asked Hawks flatly.

"I'm Jim Keaton, secretary of the Cattlemen's Association."

"Yea-a-ah? Well, glad to meetcha, Keaton. Why didn't yuh stay home where yuh belong?"

"Because two of my men were in trouble, Hawks."

"Yuh had to stick yore nose into it, too."

"How about me tellin' where the money is cached, Hawks?" asked Speedy.

"You open yore mouth and I'll blow it shut."

"Yeah, and never get it, Hawks. Yuh're not that dumb."

"What money was that, Speedy?" asked Keaton.

"The money these two stole from that express car. Me and Tombstone was on the blind-baggage, and they fell over us in the dark. They dropped the sack of money and pulled out. We got it. Sheriff, the engineer was right—he saw us. We was afraid to turn in the money, because they had the deadwood on us, but the money is hid in a safe place."

"Go ahead and tell everythin'," said Hawks huskily. "What they know won't do 'em any good, 'cause nobody is ever goin' to be able to talk about it. Buck, go down to the stable and get some ropes. We'll rope this gang, take Smith outside and set fire to the place. That'll settle this outfit, and nobody will ever know how the place got on fire. After that's over, we'll see that this lyin' hound of a Smith tells what he knows. Wait. Take their guns first—and be shore. We don't want any more mistakes."

"Where is Tombstone, Speedy?" asked Jim Keaton quietly.

Speedy shook his head.

"He's in the bottom of a deep canyon, if yuh need to know," Hawks said.

Buck Hawley collected their guns and hurried down to the stable for the ropes. . . .

Tombstone Jones was in bad physical shape by the time he reached the ranch, being hardly able to walk. He saw the two horses under the cottonwood, and three more in front of the porch. At a corner of the stable he waited, trying to see what was going on in that ranchhouse. He saw Buck Hawley come down to the stable, and saw him hurrying back, his hands filled with ropes.

"C'mon, feet," he muttered. "We've got to find out somethin', and yuh can't quit on me yet."

He slid into a tangle of willows, and began making his limping way through the brush, circling the ranchhouse. His body wanted to lie down, but his stubborn will drove him on. What clothes he still had on were torn to shreds, and he was cut and scratched, one eye almost shut, and his head was bleeding from several small scalp wounds.

Buck Hawley roped the three men, after making them lie down, then roped them together. Buck was an artist with a rope. Speedy sat there and watched the job. While Jim Hawks was getting a few personal things together, including a rifle and an extra six-shooter, Buck

Hawley proceeded to empty the contents of two lamps on the floor and walls, after which he got the oil can and spread more kerosene.

The sheriff tried to get into conversation with Hawks, but he refused to talk with any of them. Hawks looked over the three men, and said to Buck:

"You take Smith out, take an extra hoss from the front, and then head for our hosses. I'll set off the celebration. Better untie Smith's feet and start goin'."

"Hawks, yuh can't do this," said the sheriff huskily. "Man, yuh jist can't do a thing like this!"

"Watch me," sneered Hawks. "I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

Buck took the rope off Speedy's ankles, but Speedy said:

"I can't get up. I'm so blasted stiff that I—"

"Well, howdy folks!"

AN apparition, with the voice of Tombstone Jones, was looking through the open window. Hawks whirled like a trapped wolf, his gun streaking up, but the small room shuddered from the concussion of Tombstone's .45, and Jim Hawks was knocked backwards, his gun sending a bullet into the ceiling.

Buck Hawley had reached down to try and pull Speedy to his feet, but he let loose and reached for his gun as Hawks was knocked back into him, slithering to the floor. Buck tried to recover and whirl around, but Speedy shot out of that chair, slammed a shoulder into Buck, knocking him backward over Hawks. Buck's gun went flying out of his hand, and Speedy landed on him with both knees into Buck's midriff.

Tombstone came limping painfully through the doorway, his gun dangling from his hand.

"Sic 'em, cowboy!" he gasped, and sat down heavily in a chair, a silly grin on his lean, scarred face.

There was an old hunting knife on the table. Speedy grabbed it in his bound hands.

"Keep an eye on this rannahan, Tombstone," he said. "He might get his second wind." And he began cutting the captives loose.

Buck was making queer, fluttering noises with his lips, as he dragged air into his exhausted lungs. Jim Hawks was flat on his face, motionless.

"Well, it was shore a nice mornin' for it," Tombstone said blankly.

Speedy made short work of the ropes with that razor-edged knife, and the sheriff cut Speedy's wrists apart. Jim patted Speedy on the back, but couldn't say a word. Frank Delaney proceeded to brush some dust off his pants. He wanted to be nonchalant, but couldn't quite make it. Elmer Gibson merely looked at Tombstone and swore under his breath.

Buck Hawley recovered enough to sit up, staring around. The old scene had changed so much that he hardly recognized it as the place he had known, before he got knocked out.

"Hawley," Tombstone said painfully, "Red Elkton is dead. His luck wasn't as good as mine. But before he died he told me somethin' I believe we came here to find out. He said that you killed *Dell McCall.*"

Buck Hawley stared at Tombstone, trying to get this straight in his disordered mind. Red Elkton had told Tombstone that he had killed Dell McCall! Suddenly Buck's power of speech came back in a flood.

"He lied to yuh! Why, that red-headed liar! Why, I—listen to me! Will yuh listen to me? Red Elkton killed McCall. They hated each other, and they both hated Johnny Francis. Red saw a chance to put the deadwood on Johnny and get rid of McCall. Yuh've got to believe me—all of yuh. I admit robbin' the train, but I never killed anybody."

The sheriff, his hands still shaking, put handcuffs on Buck Hawley, and yanked Hank to his feet.

"Tombstone," he said, "where is Red Elkton? He's dead—but where?"

"In a canyon," replied Tombstone. "Mebbe Buck can show yuh the place. I took a chance in the dark and bucked my hoss off the edge. Red had my lead-rope tied off on his saddle-horn, and I took him along. I landed in the brush, but Red hit the rocks. I reckon he was killed instandly."

Buck stared at Tombstone, his lips working nervously.

"Instantly?" he whispered. "Yuh say. . . But how could yuh talk about—about the shootin' of McCall?"

"Buck," said Tombstone wearily," before yuh start doin' business with a

feller, yuh should find out who he is. I'm the biggest liar in the state."

"And that lie cleared Johnny Francis!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Let's get out of this kerosene smell. We'll take Buck to jail and bring the coroner out here. Tombstone, can you and Speedy ride hosses? It won't hurt blistered feet."

"Feet?" queried Tombstone. "Elmer, I slid down three hills, and yuh don't slide on yore feet. But I'll take a chance."

"About that money," said Frank Delany. "Can you find where you hid it?"

"Yeah, we'll find it."

"Yuh see," said Speedy," it was Buck and Hawks who held up the train. Red was in on the deal, but wasn't along. I made 'em suspicious that Red stuck us up and took the money. It kept 'em from burnin' me. When it comes to lyin', don't take all the credit."

"All you done was save yore skin—I saved Johnny Francis," pointed Tombstone. "My lies are constructive."

"Don't argue about ability," said Jim Keaton. "You can share state honors, as far as I'm concerned. I used to say that I hate a liar, but I've changed. I love 'em to death."

"Well, I'm glad yuh came over to visit us, Jim," said Tombstone. This case has us baffled, and we still ain't shore what Francis wanted. Mebbe you can ask him for us. We allus like to get all the details, before we start detectin'."

Next Issue's Headliners!

WHEN Tombstone and Speedy meet Ursel Reinhart Fish, of the Boston Fishes, Tombstone remarks that he's a danged long ways from water—even though they're in a town called Broken River. But the rollicking range detectives and their new-found friend soon find themselves neck-deep in a rustling and brand-blotting mystery in WISE MEN OF WISDOM CITY, the next rip-snorter from the pen of W. C. Tuttle. It's good for a load of laughs and thrills—next issue!

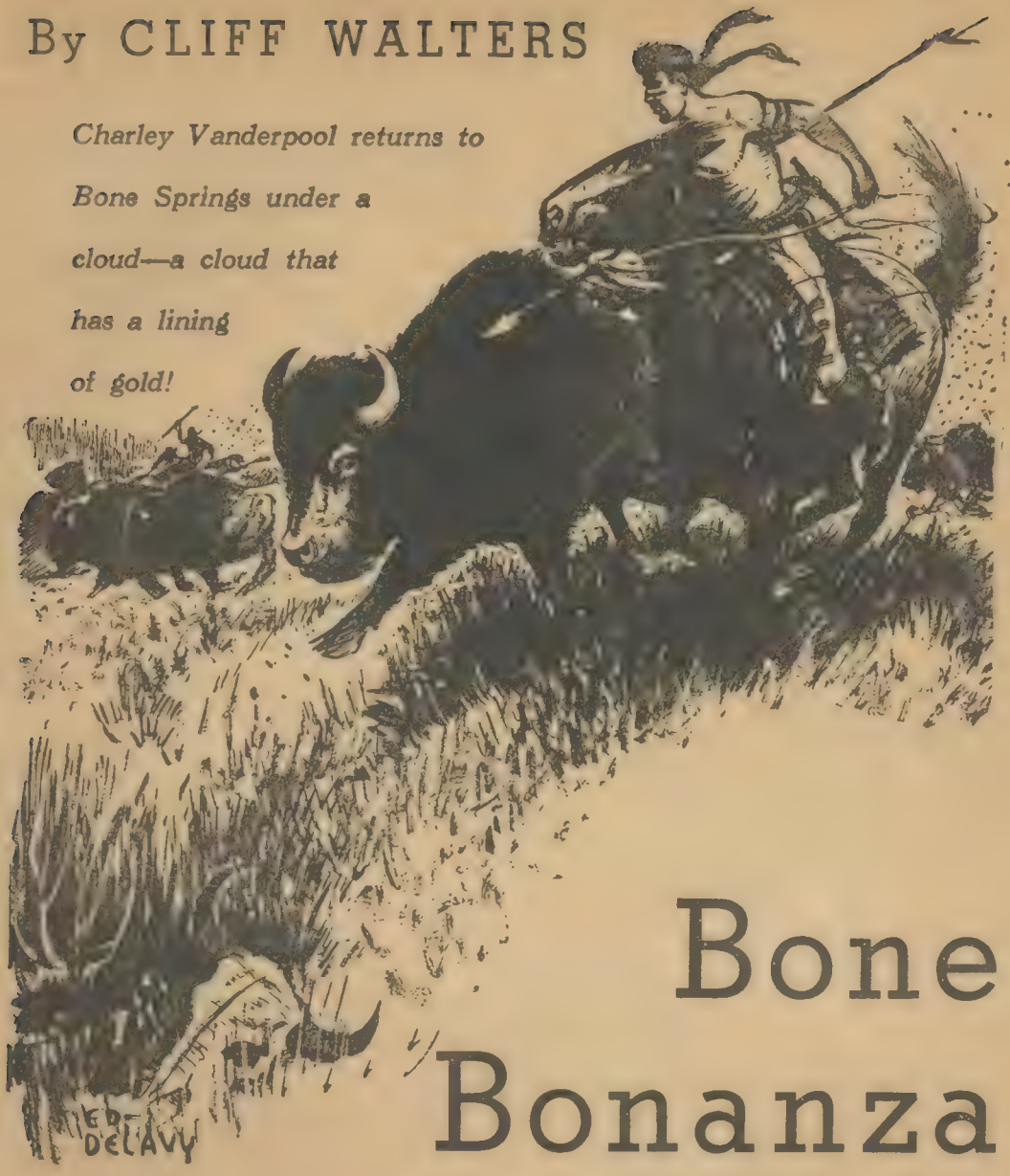
EXCITING action on every page of MAN-BREAKER RANGE, by Gunnison Steele, another punch-packed novelet coming next issue. It's the story of Johnny Thunder, the kid who looked tough—and was tough! Johnny finds gold while trapping—but a crooked deputy sheriff and two ruthless ranchers rob him and leave him for dead. Johnny won't stay dead, however—as you'll learn in MAN-BREAKER RANGE, a corking yarn!

SOME folks believe in honesty at any price—take Jim Goodspeed, for instance. He inherits his uncle's huge ranch—and determines to make restitution for the uncle's unprincipled land-grabbing tactics. But the crew of his spread doesn't see things that way—and when Jim begins returning land to his uncle's victims, he has a gruelling fight on his hands in THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, next issue's outstanding novelet by Allan K. Echols. It's a yarn that will inspire and thrill you from start to finish!

THE next issue of EXCITING WESTERN will also bring you many other stories by your favorite writers, plus ONE WAS A MURDERER, a true crime story by Luther Locke, and other features and departments. All in all, a gala issue packed with good reading for everybody!

By CLIFF WALTERS

Charley Vanderpool returns to Bone Springs under a cloud—a cloud that has a lining of gold!



Bone Bonanza

TALL, fair-haired Charley Vanderpool was too engrossed in his work to hear the buckboard driving up to his new cabin at Bone Springs. The young homesteader, painter a picture—wielding an artist's brush when perhaps he should have been wielding a crowbar over a post hole—heard no sound until a voice from the open doorway spoke:

"Can't you draw loose of genius long enough to welcome visitors, Van?"

Turning quickly from the home-made easel propped against the cabin wall, the younger man said, "Well, if it ain't the merchant of Moccasin. Come in, Ed Fordyce. That is, if you ain't here to dun me for that forty-dollar store bill I owe you."

Grinning, the rotund storekeeper answered, "You're doin' more worryin' about that bill than I am, Van. I'm not out on a dunnin' trip. Me and a friend of mine—a friend from the East—drove out this way for two reasons. We wanted

to shoot a few young sagehens, which we've done. And he wanted to see some oil paintings I've been tellin' him about."

Van's blue eyes widened. He flushed a little as he said, "If he's interested in art, he probably knows something about it. Maybe you'd better not let him see any of my work."

Ed Fordyce turned and called, "Come on in, George!" He turned back to Van and said in a lower voice, "You know your work's good. You've got more talent than a sheep bedground's got wood ticks. Don't be shy and over-modest, Van. Show George Sprague your paintings. He's got a brother who runs an art store back in Chicago."

George Sprague, a large, well-dressed man, entered the cabin and shook hands cordially with a self-conscious young homesteader. Mr. Sprague looked long and critically at the painting on which Van had been working. Van looked at Mr. Sprague—and held his breath as he awaited the Easterner's verdict. It seemed an eternity to the homesteader before Mr. Sprague boomed out in his deep voice:

"You were right, Ed. Dead right! The young man's got talent. Plenty of it. Yet, here he is, living like a hermit in these forsaken hills. Hiding his light under a bushel."

FLUSTERED but spiritually buoyed, Van answered, "Not like a hermit, exactly, Mr. Sprague. My bachelor uncle, that got me to take up this homestead, lives on the place just below here."

"What's your price on that smaller painting there, young man?" asked George Sprague, who seemed more interested in art than in Van's relatives. "The one of the cow being attacked by wolves?"

"Gosh, I—I don't know." Van swallowed hard. "Would fifteen dollars—"

"I'll give you a hundred cash for it!" said the Easterner.

"A hun—"

"Yes, a hundred dollars—but on one condition," Sprague said. "A condition I'm making for your own good. I want you to forget this worthless homestead. Use the hundred dollars for train fare back to Chicago. Take your paintings with you. And when you get there, hunt up my brother—who's in the art business—and let him make something out of you! Is it a deal?"

Hesitating but a moment, Van blurted, "Yes, it's the kind of a deal I've been dreamin' about ever since I was fourteen years old! But I've put in a year on this homestead. If I could sell the relinquishment on it—"

"I don't know who'd want it, Van," said Ed Fordyce soberly. "Still, I could use this cabin for a storeroom—if I could get the logs hauled to town. And maybe I can. You owe me forty dollars, lad. Well, if I give you sixty cash—"

"It's a deal!" Van cut in. "What's a few dollars, one way or the other, if I can sell my paintings for a hundred each?"

"For two or three hundred each," George Sprague corrected, and reached for his black note book. "I'll give you my brother's name and address. Just tell him I sent you."

A few minutes later a buckboard wheeled away toward town. Van stood in the doorway and watched that departing rig until it had rounded the base of a promontory jutting out from Bison Bluff, a mile-long sandstone cliff looming against the western sky.

Van gripped the roll of precious greenbacks in his strong, well-shaped hand. Then, as his spirits soared upward like a hawk he was watching, he cut loose with a joyous warhoop that echoed ringingly along the rocky acoustics of the bluff.

Van was enthusiastically wrapping a dozen oil paintings in the tarpaulin he had taken off his bunk when another footstep sounded at the open door of the cabin. It was his uncle, wiry, iron-gray Bob Garland who gaped for a moment, and then wanted to know what on earth was going on.

Eagerly Van told him. But the listening uncle seemed to absorb none of his nephew's elation. Coldly, flatly Bob Garland said:

"This locoed tenderfoot,—Sprague—is no more of an artist than you are, Van, if he paid you a hundred cash for that cow-and-wolf picture. It's no good. You can't paint animals, like I've told you. The wolves in that picture look like a cross between jackrabbits and hyenas. And the cow was even worse."

"Money talks louder'n an amateur's criticism," Van contended, grinning.

"And you're throwin' away a year's time, plus what little work you've done when you wasn't playin' with paint, to

go rainbow chasin'! I'm sorry now I ever told you about this place. Sorry I ever got you to come up here!"

"Too bad you feel this way, Uncle Bob," said the younger man soberly. "You've always been mighty good to me. The same as you was good to Mother before she died."

"You're not sorry or grateful or anything else!" growled the hard-bitten visitor. "You don't want to work and build up a little start in cattle, like I have. You're like your no-good father—a Hollander that come West for his health, and then sat around loafin' and playin' his fiddle and mouldin' little clay figures while I had to send your mother enough money for her, and you, to eat on!"

"Is a man no good just because he ain't strong enough to work?" Van countered.

"You're big enough, and plenty stout enough!" Bob Garland parried. "You just haven't got any gumption. Artist! If any school kid in Moccasin couldn't draw better ropin' and bronc-bustin' pictures than you can, he'd ought to have his hip pockets kicked up between his shoulder blades!"

Stung, Van retorted, "Then why did George Sprague pay me one hundred dollars?"

"He's as blind as you are. Or else he must've been blind drunk. Well, if you're bound to pull out, let me know when, and I'll haul you and your precious paintings to town—includin' that picture you left down at my place last Spring."

"Ed Fordyce is sendin' Wishbone Walsh out after me tomorrow morning," Van said. "You're welcome to come up and get my cookin' utensils and stuff, Uncle Bob."

"Wishbone'd be a good name for you!" the old man growled. "That's what you've got instead of a backbone. You and your rainbow chasin'! And locoed dreams about winnin' fame and fortune!"

STUNG again, Van replied, "I'm not the only one in the family who's had locoed dreams about findin' a fortune."

"What do you mean by that?" Bob Garland demanded, and stiffened a little.

"A long time ago my mother told me why you'd come up to this part of the range, when there was lots better places for homesteadin'. You was, and maybe you still are, chasin' rainbows and huntin' the pot of gold. It was somewhere on this range that your old dad, my grandfather, was last seen. He was headin' for Oregon in a wagon. Plannin' to start a big general store and make some money off the new settlers out there. But him and his wagon and his money disappeared. Was never heard of again.

"Oh, you've never told me why you picked on this place to homestead. But that's what brought you here—your rainbow chasin'. You didn't find your gold. All you found was a lot of hard work on a place that no man could ever make into a decent ranch, a place that don't raise enough hay hardly for a saddle horse. Yeah, and if a real hard winter hits, you won't have any cattle left."

"If you thought so little of the location here, why did you make a pretense of homesteadin' here?" Bob Garland countered coldly.

"Because it's pretty scenery," Van answered. More gently he added, "And maybe because I wanted to be near an uncle that did so much for me and my mother. Aw, let's not quarrel, Uncle Bob. Let's say good-by with a smile."

Hand outstretched, Van moved toward the door. His uncle ignored that hand, turned abruptly, went to his waiting saddle horse and rode towards home. Again Van stood and watched company depart. But there was no jubilance in his heart this time. There was a chilling shadow cast by his uncle's bitterness.

Some of that shadow still remained the next morning when Charley Vanderpool took leave of the place that had been his home for the past year now. It was a picturesque spot, Bone Springs, with the long, colorful bluff looming beyond. A bluff below which were heaped great piles of age-whitened bones; bones and black horns—all that now remained of the herds of buffalo which swift-riding Indians had stampeded over the sandstone precipice of legendary fame.

As he had a thousand times from the doorway of his cabin, Van now looked from the seat of a buckboard at the contour and colors of Bison Bluff. H imagined he could see a great cloud of sun-gilded dust floating above a herd

of shaggy, brown-black beasts being stampeded toward the rim of the bluff; monarchs of the plains surging toward their doom before fleet-mounted, bronzed riders who brandished lances adorned with bright feathers. Some day, Van told himself, he would paint that picture he could visualize so vividly. Not yet, however. Not until he felt that he was a master of the art to which he aspired.

The driver of the buckboard, a big, heavy-shouldered young man, nicknamed Wishbone Walsh because of his extremely-bowed legs, glanced at his passenger and said;

"If I could dob a little paint on some canvas, and sell it for a hundred cash, I sure wouldn't be lookin' wishful back at that no-good homestead, Vanderpool. Bob Garland was a fool for locatin' here, and talkin' his nephew into makin' the same mistake."

* * * * *

It was Spring before Van rode in another buckboard across the May-greened range. This time he was the lone passenger on the stage traveling from the new railroad point, Juniper City, to Moccasin. The driver of that stage, a garrulous, lanky man called Sandy Sorenson, said:

"I'm afraid you're goin' to get a lot of hootin' at when we reach the town of Moccasin, Van."

"I'll deserve it," replied his passenger who was flat broke. "But maybe a would-be artist would rather be back on the open range and punchin' cows for a livin' than beggin' for part-time work around the stockyards in Chicago, and slowly starvin' to death."

"You sure let the storekeeper, Ed Fordyce, take you in," said the stage driver. "Him tellin' you his Eastern friend, George Sprague knowed somethin' about art, and that he had a brother runnin' an art store in Chicago. Shucks! 'Fore you'd hardly headed for Chicago with your high hopes and no-good pictures, everybody in Moccasin knowed that George Sprague was only a drummer for a dry goods company who'd helped Fordyce play a slick trick on you just so's he could land a big order!"

VAN GAZED across the hills and said nothing. He didn't relish the thought of appearing in Moccasin, of having people hoot at him. However, the thing he dreaded most was facing his uncle. Bob Garland had been the victim of an unusually hard winter. The hard-driven snow of one blizzard after another had covered what grass there was on the range along Bison Bluff. Bob Garland's cattle had perished.

The buckboard rolled on and Sandy Sorenson said, "Yes, sir, Mr. Vanderpool, I hope you can stand bein' hooted at better'n your old uncle could."

"What do you mean?" Van asked quickly.

"Well, when storekeeper Fordyce started hootin' one day about how he'd baited you off your homestead so he could have Wishbone Walsh file on it, your Uucle Bob heard him—and knocked him down."

"Good!" Van said.

"It wasn't so good for Bob Garland," went on the stage driver. "Just then big Wishbone Walsh himself happened along. And he beat your uncle up something awful. He broke Garland's nose 'fore he got through with him."

Van's big, well-shaped hands clenched when he heard that. He said, "If Walsh thought that homestead was so worthless, why did him and Fordyce want it?"

"Haven't you guessed that—yet?" Sorenson asked. "Good gosh! It wasn't that them two vultures wanted to prove up on the land. They was after them tons and tons of buffalo bones piled along the foot of Bison Bluff. Golly! With four-horse teams and big sleds, Wishbone Walsh and another feller workin' for Fordyce hauled hundreds and hundreds of dollars worth of them bones over to the new railroad point at Juniper City, and shipped 'em out by the carload!"

Again Van's hands clenched. Carloads of bones! This was one of the reasons he had returned to this range. While working around the stockyards in Chicago he had learned that bones had commerical value. He had thought that he and his Uncle Bob might sell those buffalo bones. But now he was late. Ed Fordyce and Wishbone Walsh had beaten him to it!

The stage driver slapped the lagging off horse with the line and rambled on, "Yep, you sure overlooked a bet, Van. Now Walsh has got about all the bones hauled off his homestead, and, accordin'

to rumor, he's edgin' over onto your uncle's place, trying to get his big paws on what few tons of bones there is over there. I sure hope he don't beat old Bob up again if they get to squabblin'."

"If Walsh lays a hand on Uncle Bob—" Van didn't finish.

"I doubt if you could stop him," Sorenson replied. "Walsh weighs better'n two hundred. And, while you're pretty husky, I'm afraid a man's hands don't toughen up much just from dobbin' paint on canvas."

"Are you tryin' to hoot a little yourself, Mr. Sorenson?" Van asked flatly. "Stop this rig. I'll get out here and lug my old grip across the hills to Bison Bluff."

"Sure," said the driver, halting his team. "I don't blame you for not wantin' to show up in Moccasin, as I hinted before."

Disappointed, bitterness traveled with Van across the miles of May-greened range he walked over. He was haunted by the dismal months of failure behind, months of wrangling baled hay around the stockyards, after his paintings of bucking horses had been scorned by art dealers who had called those paintings crude and objectionably amateurish. Now, too late, he had returned home; with the hope that, by working hard, he might reap a welcome financial harvest from piles of old buffalo bones that he and his uncle had considered worthless. A harvest that Fordyce and Walsh had already reaped.

A dark cloud obscured the late afternoon sun as Van, shifting a cheap, bulging suitcase from one hand to the other, made his way toward the rim of Bison Bluff, and the steep trail which descended that long precipice of sandstone. The air grew sultry. Sweat dripped from under the wayfarer's hat and trickled down his face. Thunder rumbled. A prong of lightning stabbed through the dark, ever-growing cloud.

Van had descended the bluff's steep trail, was heading toward the cabin he had built at Bone Springs when a hail storm broke loose. Frozen pellets from the sky came crackling down to bounce off rocks and sting the broad shoulders of the man caught in that deluge. Van didn't attempt to make it to the cabin a quarter of a mile away. He turned and ran back toward the base of the bluff. He stumbled over pieces of bone and the metal-bound standard of an old wagon bolster.

THE HAIL lashed down harder. The face of the bluff was only a storm-beaten blur to the eyes of the man racing toward it. Van shifted his course slightly. A moment later he tossed his suitcase up onto the sandstane shelf that the elements had carved into the face of the rimrock's base, a shelf cushioned with deep, fine sand and conopied with an overhanging canopy of sandstone above. Here was ample shelter—a pocket, some seven feet above the ground, into which Van scrambled.

Van lay in that deep, fine sand, warmed by the afternoon sun, and watched the fury of the storm until his eyes grew heavy. Then, tired from his long walk and a sleepless night of riding the rods of a freight car, he slept. He was still asleep when the storm abated, when a big moon wheeled up over the horizon to the east, a moon that glinted but feebly on the rusted metal which bound an old wagon bolster.

At sunup the following morning Van walked swiftly down a willow-fringed trail which led to his uncle's old cabin at Wallow Spring. Suddenly the young man came to a halt and watched, through willow leaves, a four-horse team driving up to that cabin which stood only a few feet away.

Van's eyes narrowed, his mouth tightened a little as he recognized Wishbone Walsh, the burly driver of that wagon. Then he heard Walsh yell gruffly:

"Come out here, Garland! You needn't hide in your old shack like a whipped dog just because you seem me comin'. I want to talk business with you!"

Van saw his uncle, looking older and more grizzled, emerge from the cabin, and heard him say, "Nobody invited *you* to come here, Walsh. Keep on goin'!"

"Not till I pick up a load of bones I'll need to finish out a car down at Juniper City," was the reply. "I've scraped up about all I can over at that homestead your ignorant nephew tossed away without collecting the bone bounty off it. But I could pick up a load of bones from your land. Now, don't scowl, Mr. Garland. I'll make you a good deal on 'em. I'll trade you the cabin on that homestead—the homestead I turned back to the government

a week ago—for just one measly load of buffalo bones. And that'd be a big bargain for you if you only tore that cabin down and burnt it for firewood. How about it?"

"Get off my land and keep off it!" Bob Garland answered.

"Listen, you bull-headed old grudge nurser!" Walsh answered, and jumped off his wagon. "Ed Fordyce sent me out here after a load of bones and I'm not goin' back without 'em. I'll help myself to 'em. Yeah, and so I can keep an eye on you, you'll help me load 'em! Come on!"

"You lay a hand on me, Walsh, and I'll—"

"You'll do just what you did before. Nothing! Come on, Mr. Garland, or I'll start slantin' your funny-lookin' nose off in the other direction for you!"

"Keep away from him, Walsh!"

As that harsh voice cut through the morning air, both Bob Garland and Walsh whirled to see Van striding forward.

Garland said, "Van!" and his faded eyes lighted up.

"Well, if the great artist ain't come crawlin' back to his dear old uncle, probably lookin' for a square meal!" Wishbone Walsh jeered. Yeah, and barkin' like a big mean dog instead of like the whinin' mongrel he is. Well, here's how you scare me, Mr. Vanderpool!"

Walsh's bowed legs carried his formidable bulk swiftly toward Van. A big fist, the same fist that had broken Bob Garland's nose lashed out—and missed. Before Walsh could bring up his left fist, a quick, savage blow cracked to his mouth. Another plowed into his midsection. And still another, so swift he couldn't evade it, came smashing to his mouth again.

The big teamster swore and lunged with the fierceness of an attacking bull. This time he jolted Van with a grazing blow to the chin. But the lighter, more agile man was countering again. He dug another vicious hook to Walsh's stomach, planted a hard stab to Walsh's bleeding mouth and threw a right that flattened his nose. Walsh staggered under the impact of that last blow. He took a still more wicked right to the nose again, a blow in which had exploded all the bitterness and hate that Van had harbored during the long dark months gone by.

Walsh fell like he had been struck with a sledge hammer. Old Bob Garland gaped at the fallen man, then turned slowly to his victorious nephew and said in an awed voice:

"Good golly, Van! Where did you ever learn to fight like that?"

"When I was wranglin' baled hay around the stockyards in Chicago," replied the young man.

"It—it looks like Walsh's big nose ain't goin' to be quite the same any more, either," said Bob Garland.

"Dump some cold water on him, Uncle Bob," said Van, grinning. "You wouldn't want anybody to come along and find your dooryard full of such trash as that, would you?"

Five minutes later a four-horse team, with an empty wagon and a cursing driver, was heading toward Moccasin. As that vehicle rolled away Bob Garland, still awed, turned to Van.

"It's sure fine to see you again, lad. I was too sore, too hurt, maybe, to shake hands with you when you left. But now—" He offered a gnarled hand that Van caught and gripped. "If only one of us rainbow chasers had had sense enough to know the value of them old buffalo bones. But Walsh and Fordyce reaped the harvest."

"Nope," Van disagreed. "They just cultivated it deep enough to make it bloom when they moved that heap of bones from the base of Bison Bluff."

"What do you mean?"

"This," said Van, taking a gold piece from his pocket. "I stumbled over an old wagon bolster stickin' up through the dirt and bone mulch yesterday evening. A camped wagon that was smashed to pieces when a stampeded herd of buffalo come tumblin' over the bluff and landed on it. I also found a couple of old mule hoofs, with the rusted shoes still on 'em."

"Mule shoes? Gold pieces?" Bob Garland choked. "That must—that *must've* been—"

"The one that belonged to your dad, my grandfather," Van said. "This ain't the only gold piece. By diggin' around, I found an old metal box containin' a hundred and forty-nine more of 'em. All gold double eagles! An old box Wishbone Walsh must've walked over a hundred times. It was right by a little

spring I didn't even know was under that old heap of bones."

BOB GARLAND trembled. He was still trembling and out of breath when he and Van reached the spot where, years ago, a lone camper had met with tragedy. Staring at the old box and its contents, far more treasure than the sale of bone fertilizer had yielded to a pair of crooks, Bob Garland said;

"The pot of gold at the rainbow's end!"

"Minted gold," the younger man answered. "Enough for you to start over again on."

"For *us* to start on," his uncle corrected, huskily.

"I won't touch one of those gold double eagles any more than I'll ever touch a paint brush again!" Van declared firmly. "It was your money that helped Mother and me out when the goin' was tough for us, and—"

"You will touch a paint brush again!" his uncle interrupted. "You know that paintin' you left at my place, the one of the old red chimney rock over yonder, and with the wild flowers growin' at the foot of it like they are right now? Well, a *real* artist, one I've read about, come along the other day and offered me three hundred dollars for it."

"Three hun— And you wouldn't sell it to him, as hard up as you've been?"

"Nope. I hung onto it, hopin' you'd come back. Van, and fearin' you never would. That real artist says you've got a great talent for paintin' 'still life' as he calls it. Just rocks and hills and scenery. He said, 'If you see your nephew again, tell him never to paint another animal.' So, lad, you see we've both found something at the end of our rainbow chasin'—thanks to you."

A warmth came over Van as he listened to those huskily-spoken words. A deep, inward warmth that dispelled the shadows of defeat as this morning's sunlight had dispelled darkness from these hills which, many years ago, had echoed to the earth-jarring thunder of buffalo stampeding to their doom. And to the doom of a lone camper whose eternal monument would be this sandstone bluff rising in rugged grandeur against the Western sky.

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As the horse guard lifted his gun, Wayne fired

CHAPTER I

Saloon Fight

IF JIM Wayne had listened to old Chet Ulrich, owner of the Cross C spread, his boss, that ruckus wouldn't have happened. Ulrich liked the tall young cowboy and gave him some well meant advice.

"Stay out of Chapin, and pertickler the Bull's Head Saloon, for a spell, Jim," Ulrich counseled. "Sime Harlow won't forget that callin' yuh gave him yesterday, and he'll be out to even up.'

Wayne's heavy brows drew together. "I'm not scairt of Sime Harlow," he growled.

"Nobody says yuh are, so there's no reason to prove yuh ain't," Ulrich replied "Besides, Sime ain't the only Harlow. There's his brothers Cole and Jesse,

A NOVELET

by A. LESLIE

WASHED in BLOOD

to say nothing of a herd of cousins and uncles and in-laws."

"I'm not scairt of any of the Harlows," Wayne said, his frown deepening.

"Nobody's sayin' yuh are," Ulrich repeated. "A man may not be scairt of a cyclone, but that don't mean he has to step in front of one to prove it. He just gets himself busted up, and it don't prove nothin'. Yuh may have made Sime Harlow take water, but just the same, the Harlows run this section of Texas, and John Armstrong, the sheriff, is a cousin of theirs. Judge Parker is another. There ain't a bigwig in the political set-up in this section but what's related to th Harlows or tied up with 'em in a business way. And that goes for about half the big spread owners and businessmen, too. They got the section sewed up as tight as a steer's mouth in fly time. Mebbe it won't always be that way. Folks are gettin' sorta fed up with Harlow domination. But right now that's how the situation stands, and yuh can't get away from it."

"Sime Harlow had it comin'," Wayne countered defensively. "I caught him cold, slick-ironin' the cards. I called him proper, and he took it."

"Nacherly he did," replied Ulrich. "Reckon he didn't see no sense in committin' suicide. Everybody knows yuh inherited your Dad's fast gunhand and straight shootin'-eye. Harlow wouldn't have had a chance, and he knew it."

"Ain't never killed anybody," Wayne grunted, still on the defense.

"Nope, not yet," Ulrich agreed. "But if yuh keep on the way yuh're headin', yuh will, and yuh'll find out, too, that a dead man don't make no soft pillow of nights, even though yuh figger yoreself to be in the right. But let that

angle pass. Suppose yuh down one of the Harlows, and don't get yourself downed at the same time—yuh'll be on the run. And yuh'll have a hard time gettin' out of the country. If yuh're looped yuh'll be the main attraction at a necktie party, that's all. Better listen to me, Jim."

YES IT was the voice of age, experience and wisdom speaking. But hot-headed Youth was deaf to advice. Doubtless neither Ulrich nor Wayne had ever heard the expression, "If Age only could, if Youth only would!" Ulrich would have understood what it meant. Wayne would not.

As a result, three days later found Jim Wayne in Chapin, the cowtown and county seat, and in the Bull's Head saloon. Wayne did not realize what Ulrich clearly understood—that the Harlows cauld not afford to ignore the affront to their prestige. Their rule was one of terror and force. One sign of weakness would mean the beginning of the end of their grip on the section. They were practically forced to even up the score.

Wayne was having a quiet drink at the bar when Sime Harlow entered. With him were his two brothers, Cole, "The Butcher", and Jesse. Cole Harlow was a massive man with little pig eyes utterly devoid of expression, a thick-lipped mouth, a barrel chest and abnormally long arms. Jesse was tall, gaunt, sunken and uncommunicative. His agate-hard eyes were set very close together. His face, far from a pleasant face, was that of an able, adroit man untroubled by conscience. Sime was rather good looking, arrogant of expression, with a swagger. He was the weak link in the Harlow chain.

As the brothers shouldered along the bar, Jim Wayne knew he was on a spot—knew it even before Sime Harlow stumbled awkwardly and lurched into him, sending the glass flying from his hand.

"Why don't yuh keep your feet out of the way!" Sime snarled.

Wayne did not even look at Sime as he swept him aside with his left arm. His eyes were fixed on the Butcher, the cold-blooded killer of the trio. He saw Cole Harlow's hand flash toward his belt . At the same instant his own hand flickered down and up. He shot as Harlow cleared leather.

The Butcher's gun exploded. The bullet slashed the calf of Wayne's leg, the shock hurling him back against the bar. But his own slug drilled the Butcher through and through. Sime and Jesse, shouting curses, were going for their guns.

But Wayne had a brain as hair-trigger quick as his gunhand. He leaped forward, threw his left arm around Cole Harlow and hugged him close, swinging his bulky form around as a shield. He felt, rather than heard, Sime Harlow's bullet thud into the Butcher's sagging body. He fired over Cole's shoulder. The slug knocked Sime backward. He fell over a table and crashed to the floor, blood spouting from his smashed shoulder.

Jesse Harlow, his cadaverous face a mask of hate, took deliberate aim. Wayne ducked low as the dying Butcher slumped to the floor, felt the wind of Jesse's bullet and pulled trigger.

Jesse reeled sideways, against the bar, his arm broken, his gun clattering to the floor. As he jerked his left-hand gun Wayne whirled, bounded to the swinging doors and through them, bullets smashing the woodwork behind him. His horse stood at a nearby hitchrack, reins twisted together and looped over a peg.

Despite the pain of his wounded leg that threatened to crumble under him, Wayne scrambled into the saddle, jerked the bridle free and sent the big bay racing up the street. He bent low in the saddle, slugs whining about him, rounded a slithering turn and thundered out of town. For more than a mile he sent the bay along the trail at utmost speed.

"They'll be after us, feller," he muttered to the horse. "I don't figger there's a horse in town what can come up with yuh for siftin' sand, but they'll get relays and run us down. We've got to out-figger 'em, that's our only chance. Sun's almost down and mebbe we can give 'em the slip."

A quarter of a mile farther on he turned the bay from the trail and into the brush country that sloped upward to the hills. As the sun vanished and the shadows deepened, he dismounted and examined his wound. He was thankful to find no bones broken, but the

ragged tear in the muscle of his calf throbbed almost unbearably and he had lost considerable blood. He bound it up as best he could, mounted and rode on. It was well past midnight when, far into the hills, he risked lighting a tiny fire in a deep cleft sheltered by the overhang of a cliff. Then he took stock of the situation as he carefully cleaned his guns.

AFTER the fashion of men who ride much alone, he talked to the big Colts.

"They'll try and track us through the brush when it is light," he told the sixes, "but I don't figger they'll have much luck on the hard ground. I've a notion I can hole up here until I'm starved out. Nothin' to eat in these hills at this time of the year. I'll have to slide out to look for chuck, sooner or later. They'll be watchin' every trail, and every pueblo will be on the lookout for me. The Harlows have relations and friends all over the section. Cole was done for, all right. That slug of mine dusted his coat on both sides, and if that wasn't enough, Sime finished him with the bullet he intended for me.

"Sure wish it had been Jesse instead of Cole. Jesse is the brains of the outfit, Cole was just a fightin' man. So long as Jesse is around, the Harlows will keep on runnin' things. Yep, so long as Jesse is kickin', I'm done in this region. Jesse is the sort who never forgets, and he never fails to even up. He'll never be satisfied until he sees me stretch rope or lean against the hot end of a passin' bullet. He'd be plumb willin' to take a chance on gettin' his own come-uppance just so he could send me out first. He's that sort.

"As I figger it, I've got just one chance. That is to slide south out of the hills, skirt along Corpus Christi Bay in the bad country down there, and try and make it across the desert—seventy miles of hell—to the Rio Grande. Once I get across into Mañana land I can work west and cross the Border again into Arizona. Be safe enough there. I figger the Harlows would never dare put up their case to the authorities in another state to get me back to Texas, even though they're big he-wolfs of this section.

"Uh-huh that's what I got to do. But it'll take considerable trail fannin' to do it. If I could just hole up somewhere till things cool off a mite and the Harlows figgered I managed to get out of the country, it wouldn't be so bad. But there's no holin' up in these hills for long. Well, nothin' to do but take it as it comes."

With that he curled up beside his fire and tried to forget his miseries in sleep.

The pain of his wound awakened Wayne at dawn. He found his leg was so stiff and sore that riding was impossible. There was nothing to do but take the chance and lie quiet for a while. All that day he rested beside the spring, and through the night. The following morning his leg was in much better shape but he was suffering severely from hunger. Toward the middle of the afternoon he could stand his hunger no longer. Saddling his horse he rode southward through the hills, veerng slightly to the east.

Wayne did not know the country east of Chapin very well, but he did know that a long, jagged spur of the hill and brush country extended south by east to the distant shore of Corpus Christi Bay.

Somewhere, not so very, far distant there should be a trail, an old smuggler's trail, that wound through the brush country and led to the bay. If he could make that trail, and travel by night, he figured he had a chance. But first of all he must find food.

CHAPTER II

Hunted Man

THE sun was almost below the hill crests when he came out upon the summit of a rise and saw, across the long descent of the sag, a huddle of buildings some three miles to the south and east. He pulled up and gazed.

"I've a notion that's a pueblo I've heard of over here called Ramirez," he muttered. "If I'm right, the trail had ought to be not far from the base of the sag. Can't risk slidin' into the town, but mebbe there'll be a

shack built somewhere along the trail where I can tie onto some grub."

He sent the bay down the slope and, a little later, saw the gray ribbon of a trail skirting its base. He rode out upon it, cautiously. It was deserted and showed signs of little travel. He proceeded southward, wary and watchful, rounded a turn and pulled up short.

Directly ahead was a stout tree, and tacked to the trunk of the tree was something white, upon which a word in solid black letters seemed to leap at him. He rode a little closer, bent toward the poster, and read:

MURDER

The word stood out grim and ominous. Under it, in slightly smaller letters:

One Thousand Dollars Reward
Dead or Alive

And beneath:

The above sum will be paid for information leading to the arrest of one James Wayne, dead or alive, wanted for the murder of Cole Harlow, of Chapin, Texas.

Followed a very accurate description of himself. The reward notice was signed by the sheriff of the county.

"And it doesn't say anythin' about conviction, as that sort of notice usually does," Wayne told himself grimly. "Reckon they figger if they can just make the arrest ,they'll take care of the conviction angle, all right."

He shrugged his broad shoulders, turned his back on the reward notice and rode on, more warily than before. Less than a mile farther on the trail forked. One branch, down which he could see for a considerable distance, turned sharply east, evidently leading to the town. The other branch continued southward, through a thick stand of chaparral. And a few hundred yards toward him from the forks stood a ramshackle cabin, from the chimney of which rose a coil of blue smoke.

Wayne hesitated, his grip tightening on the bridle. Then he rode forward and pulled up in front of the cabin. He shouted. A man appeared in the doorway, peering toward him with outstretched neck.

"How's chances for grub, feller?" Wayne called.

The man hesitated. "Reckon yuh're welcome to what I got, cowboy," he replied. "I was just gettin' ready to eat. Ain't fancy, but reckon it's fillin'."

"That'll suit me fine,' Wayne accepted. "Ain't swallered for so long my stomach figgers my neck's sewed up tight. Got a bait for my horse?"

"Lead him around back. You'll find a shed there. Put him up alongside my bronc," the man said. "Oats in a sack."

Wayne followed directions and tethered the bay under the shed, which was some distance behind the cabin, filling a manger with a generous helping from the sack. The cabin owner's mount, a bony roan, paid scant attention to the bay but went on with the serious business of eating. Wayne started to remove the rig from his horse, then changed his mind.

"Reckon yuh can make out the way yuh are, Rojo," he told the red horse. "Might want yuh in a hurry, never can tell."

With that he entered the cabin. The only occupants appeared to be the man, a scrawny, slit-eyed individual in a dirty shirt and overalls, and a spindling, shock-headed boy who stared at Wayne with sullen disapproval.

The meal the man dished up was coarse but plentiful, and Wayne went after it like a starving man, which he was. The man plied him with rambling conversation as they ate, mentioning that he was a wood-cutter and found a "purty good buyin'" in the town less than a mile down the east fork of the trail.

"Uh-huh, they calls it Ramirez," he replied in answer to Wayne's question.

WAYNE was rolling a cigarette when he realized he had not seen the shock-headed boy about since the man began preparing the meal. Which abruptly seemed strange. His grey eyes narrowed suddenly, but he said nothing. Instead he got to his feet in a leisurely way, stretching his long arms above his head. In an aimless fashion he sauntered to the door and glanced out. Then he whirled, his guns whipping out and menacing his host with their black muzzles.

That quick glance had showed five men, behind them the shock-headed boy on the bony roan, riding swiftly and purposefully up the trail from the town.

The man's jaw dropped as the gun muzzles yawned hungrily toward him. Wayne's voice cut at him, edged with steel.

"Got a hankerin' for that thousand-dollar reward, eh?" he said. "Had the kid slide out and head for town while we were eatin'. Easy for him to slip out through the brush without me hearin' him. All right, on your feet! Get out the back door and quick. Head straight for the shed where my horse is."

Trembling and gulping, the man obeyed. He did not utter a word. It was as if his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, which probably it did.

At a swift pace they reached the shed. Wayne breathed a sigh of relief as he glimpsed his tall bay still in the stall. He had not believed that the boy would hide his horse, but it was almighty good to see Rojo there, just the same. He gripped the bay's bridle.

"All right," he told the man, "hug your face and back up against the wall. Don't move. One cheep out of you and yuh're a goner."

The man obeyed. He was pallid with fright. In the shadow of the rear wall of the cabin, Wayne mounted Rojo and waited, tense and alert.

Wayne figured he had one chance, and that a mighty slim one. He reasoned that the posse would leave their horses some distance below the cabin, creep stealthily forward on foot and rush suddenly through the front door, hoping to take him by surprise.

Slowly the seconds crawled along. Suddenly Wayne was aware of soft movement in front of the cabin. An instant of tingling suspense, then a pounding of boots on the floor boards and a shouted command.

"Go, Rojo, go!" he yelled, and struck the wall of the cabin a resounding thump with his gun barrel.

Instantly the big bay shot forward, swerving around the cabin in obedience to the slight pressure of the rein on his neck. He hit the trail with drumming hoofs, raced down it.

Directly ahead were the horses of the posse. A man held the bridles. He dropped them and went for his gun. Wayne's Colt boomed and the man reeled back and fell, yelling with pain and pawing at a blood spouting arm. The horses bucked and milled.

Wayne sent a stream of lead hissing over their backs. They whirled around and fled back down the trail toward town, snorting with fright. Behind sounded yells, and a banging of guns. Lead whined past the fleeing horseman, fanning his face, plucking at his sleeve like an urgent hand.

Rojo swerved sharply, flashed onto the south fork and into the shelter of the screening brush. The yells behind swiftly grew faint.

Wayne settled himself in the saddle and holstered his gun. "Reckon they'll be held up quite a spell before they run their cayuses down," he muttered, adding bitterly, "Looks like every man's hand is against me in this district. Won't be safe till I'm the other side of the Big River, if I ever make it there."

The night was growing very dark. Overhead the sky was heavily overcast. A wind was stirring the growth. It strengthened swiftly until the trees were groaning, the branches tossing wildly. Twigs and leaves showered down upon the speeding horseman. A storm was roaring in from the bay. There was every promise of a wild night.

Not that Wayne cared particularly about that. It would serve to slow up pursuit, might even cause its abandonment until daylight, which would be in his favor. Mile after mile he rode, while the storm increased its fury. The wind was a gale, now. Lightning flickered on the breast of the black cloud. There was an ominous mutter of thunder.

"Rain comin', too," he told the bay. "Well, reckon we can take it."

THE trail began swerving more to the west. To Wayne's ears came a low moaning that increaesd in volume as he rode. He knew it to be the storm driven waters of the bay lashing the rocky coast. The trail continued to swerve in a long sweep, until he was riding almost due west. The going was bad, too, the uneven track studded with boulders and with occasional bushes that grew on its little used surface. He slowed Rojo's pace somewhat. Which was fortunate, for an instant later disaster truck.

The bay suddenly stumbled, neighed sharply with pain and went down in a floundering heap. Wayne had barely time to kick his feet free and hurl himself sideways from the saddle. He

struck the ground heavily and for a moment lay stunned. Then he staggered to his feet, cold with apprehension, lighted a match and shielded the flame in his cupped hands. He breathed a great sigh of relief as the tiny glow revealed Rojo erect and with all four hoofs planted solidly on the ground. But when Wayne led him forward a few paces, he limped badly.

Wayne groped about in the growth, found a dry sotol stalk and broke it off. He touched the flame of a match to the splintered end and soon had a torch going that would withstand the beat of the wind. By its light he examined the bay's injury. One foreleg was evidently badly wrenched. Already it was swelling somewhat. But Wayne was thankful it was nothing worse.

"Reckon yuh can keep goin', anyhow, feller," he told the bay. "But we'll have to take it easy. Makes things look bad, though."

He beat out the torch, started to cast it aside, then, instead, thrust the charred butt into his coat pocket.

"Might need it, and everythin' is liable to be soakin' wet before long," he muttered as he swung back into the saddle.

With his horse limping painfully, he rode on. The lightning flashes were almost continuous now. They showed the broken surface of the trail winding on between thinning growth. To his left the moan and mutter of the unseen bay was loud. Overhead the wind wailed eerily. The growth tossed and strained.

Abruptly Wayne pulled Rojo to a halt. A lightning flash had revealed something huge and black to his right, set back a little from the trail. A second flash showed it to be the bulk of a stone building. A wide-open door yawned blackly. High, arched, paneless windows stared like eyeless sockets.

Wayne hesitated. The first drops of rain were touching his face like icy fingers. Ahead the trail was rough, and Rojo was in no very good shape. The building had all the look of an uninhabited ruin, but appeared solid enough. He swung down from the saddle.

"Got a notion we can do worse than hole up in there till comes daylight," he told the horse. "If those reward hunters are followin' on our track, the chances are they'll pass this place by. We'll be gone in the mornin', anyhow."

CHAPTER III

Brother Juan

WAYNE led the bay through the wide doorway. Rojo's iron shoes rang hollowly on stone. Wayne drew the butt of the torch from his pocket, lighted it and stared about.

The building was unquestionably a ruin and had long since been such. The great room in which he found himself was devoid of furnishings of any kind. At the far end he could dimly see great blocks of stone scattered about.

"One of the old abandoned Mission houses that are scattered along the water in this section," he deduced. "Well, over there is what looks like a dry corner away from the windows. We'll just hole up there, feller. The rain's comin' down like a waterfall outside now."

He got the rig off Rojo, gave him a good rubdown and left the tired horse to his own devices. Then, with his saddle for a pillow and his slicker for covering, he stretched out on the stone flags and went to sleep.

The storm had blown itself out when Wayne snapped awake with startling suddenness. Moonlight was streaming through the high window and in a patch of ghostly radiance he sensed movement. For an instant he lay glaring, then he sprang, catlike, to his feet, gun in hand.

"Hold it!" he rasped. "Yuh're covered!"

There was a moment of silence, then a deep and musical voice said:

"Peace! my son. Why do you so greatly fear?"

Wayne hesitated, rigid, alert. The voice was calm, unhurried, holding no trace of fright. Wayne decided to take a chance. He got out a match, struck it, held the flame far to one side. The glow fell upon a tall figure clad in a long brown robe. The hood of the robe was thrown back, revealing snow white hair. In his fleeting glimpse before the light flickered out, Wayne saw a deeply lined face dominated by eyes bright and black.

Again the voice spoke, in the same calm, unhurried accents:

"It would seem you have been sleeping on a hard bed, my son. Come with me and I will offer you a more comfortable resting place."

Wayne quickly made up his mind. He decided there was nothing to fear from the old man who had appeared so strangely from the night.

"Okay," he said. "Lead on."

The old man crossed the great room, a shadow moving through the patches of moonlight, to the far end. He picked his way among the dimly outlined blocks of stone, paused at the rear of the building. Wayne heard the creak of a hinge.

"Just a moment, my son," said the old man. "I will make a light."

Wayne halted. Another moment and a yellow glow outlined the rectangle of a door in the stone wall.

"Come," said the deep voice.

Wayne walked forward, threading his way between the blocks. He passed through the doorway and found himself in a fairly large room that was roughly but comfortably furnished with home-made chairs and a table and two bunks built against the walls. A bracket lamp provided light. In one end was a stone fireplace, various cooking utensils hanging nearby from pegs driven into the stone.

The old man turned to face his guest. Wayne got a good look at the long brown robe, damp from the rain.

"Oh, a priest, eh?" he exclaimed.

"Rather, a Brother." The old man smiled, "of an old and well famed order. Be seated, my son. But stay, there is your horse, who also has claim upon my hospitality. I will care for him first."

He walked through the doorway to the outer room.

"Wait, I'll go with yuh!" Wayne called, "Rojo won't let anybody but me touch him."

"I think that he will allow me to touch him," the old man replied. "If you will please hold the lamp high."

WAYNE removed the lamp from its bracket and did as directed. Dubiously he watched the old man approach Rojo. The red horse stood with forward pricked ears. Then without hesitation he thrust his soft muzzle into the hand fearlessly extended to him.

"You win, *Padre,*" Wayne chuckled as the old Brother led the horse to another door that showed in the wall behind the scattered blocks. Again there was the slight creak of a rusty hinge. Stepping forward with the light, Wayne saw that the second room was fitted up as a stable. There were several stalls. In one of which stood a small gray mare.

"My *caballo,*" said the Brother, with a wave of his hand. "She did not accompany me tonight."

"What were yuh doin' out in such a storm,*Padre?*" Wayne asked as the old man busied himself providing for Rojo's wants.

"Visiting one who is ill," the monk replied.

"A wet night to go visitin',' Wayne commented.

"Sickness and misfortunes know no season and wait not upon the whims of the elements," the Brother replied.

"Reckon that's right," Wayne agreed. "So yuh live here in this tumble-down shack, *Padre?*'

"I have for some time," the other replied. "Come, I am hungry, and doubtless you are also. I will prepare food for us."

He closed the stable door, lead the way back to the other room and there also shut out the chill of the night. Soon he had a fire going into the fireplace and an appetizing meal under way. Wayne fished out the makin's and rolled a cigarette with the slim fingers of his left hand.

He watched the old man curiously. The Brother looked up, met the cowboy's glance, and smiled, his wrinkled face seeming suddenly wonderfully youthful.

"I am Brother Juan, my son," he remarked.

Without hesitation, Wayne supplied his own name, and wondered an instant later why he had done so. Somehow, it had seemed the natural thing to do. He had a vague feeling that a man just didn't lie to Brother Juan, or hold back anything from him.

The feeling persisted when, after they had finished eating, Brother Juan asked a question,

"And how did you happen to be

sleeping on the Mission floor on such a night, my son? You must have traveled far."

Wayne's answer was to recount his recent misadventures. Brother Juan listened without comment, other than nodding his white head from time to time.

"So yuh see," Wayne concluded, "I'm sort of up against it. I'm on the run, and my horse is plumb lame. Funny yarn, isn't it, *Padre?* Or do yuh figger I'm a liar about the whole business?"

"My son," returned Brother Juan, with his quick, youthful smile, "why should I think you a liar who, from the moment my eyes rested upon you, knew you to be a true man? Also, I am familiar with conditions in this part of the land and understand the predicament in which you found yourself. You were foolish, perhaps, but then the young are always foolish, and swayed by emotion rather than reason. But I do not think your plight is such a desperate one. Here you can remain, in safety, until an opportunity presents for you to reach *Mejico* as you have planned."

"But, *Padre,*' Wayne objected, "somebody is liable to come snoopin' around and see me here. I wouldn't want to get you mixed up in a ruckus."

"I think there is little to fear on that score," Brother Juan replied. "Folk in the vicinity shun this old building. They believe it to be haunted."

"Haunted?"

"Yes, by the ghost of Rezin."

"Rezin. Who was he?"

"Rezin," returned Brother Juan, "was one of the most notorious of the many pirates who, in the old days, preyed on the commerce of Spain in waters near to this place. Shall I tell you the story of Rezin and his end, which took place within the walls of this very Mission building?"

"Like to hear it," Wayne said, with interest.

SO, WHILE the fire snapped and crackled cheerfully on the wide hearth and the blue smoke of his cigarette formed a filmy curtain whereupon were outlined the lurid happenings of the dim past, Jim Wayne listened to the story of Rezin, Scourge of the Gulf.

Rezin was a desperate devil who knew naught of fear. But one morning, when a curtain of fog lifted from the face of the waters, he found his fast little brig under the guns of a towering Spaniard. Against such a weight of metal he could hope for nothing. All he could do was about ship and run for it.

The brig was fast, but the great Spaniard also proved to be fast. On she came, beautiful with her towering cloud of snowy canvas, hideous with her grinning gun ports. Rezin took a last desperate chance.

He ran into the bay later to be known as Corpus Cristi, slipped his small ship over a bar and into the shallow waters of a channel between the islands, confident that his deep-draughted pursuer could not follow.

But for once Rezin had erred, although he knew the treacherous waters well. The channel proved to be navigable but for a short distance. The brig was forced to halt and drop anchor.

Into the bay nosed the Spaniard. She could not cross the bar, but she did manage to get within long gun range of the brig. She also dropped anchor and methodically began to pound the little ship to pieces.

All through the long afternoon the heavy balls ripped and tore the brig, smashing her masts, opening her hull, littering her deck with dead. When darkness fell there remained alive only the huge, black-bearded Rezin and two of his men, brutal, degraded sailors with little intelligence but filled with the desperate courage of their breed.

Under cover of darkness, Rezin and his two men launched a small boat that remained intact. They reached the shore and headed westward along the coast. Rezin, badly wounded but indomitable of spirit, led the way. Behind him marched the two sailors, bearing on their shoulders a heavy wooden chest bound with iron.

Just as dawn was breaking, they knocked at the door of an old stone Mission house standing back from the waters of the bay. They were admitted by four old monks, all that remained of a band of zealots who, many years before, founded the Mission in this wild land and raised the building. Rezin demanded food and drink for himself and his men. The monks supplied all that was requested, and served their unbidden guests, casting fearful glances at the blood stained pirates the while.

Rezin, whose keen eyes missed nothing, saw their heads draw together as they whispered.

After he had finished eating he rose to his feet, wiping his mouth with the back of his hairy hand. He said no word, but steel glittered as his cutlass flashed from its sheath. Four blows he struck and the four old monks lay dead upon the stone floor.

"Dead men bear no stories," Rezin observed, wiping his bloody blade.

"That is so," muttered one of the sailors. "They would have betrayed us. Now we are safe, with our gold." His eyes dropped greedily to the iron-bound chest as he spoke.

Rezin, half crazed with the pain of his wounds, always suspicious, noted the direction of the glance. Again he said no word, but again his cutlass flashed. The sailor fell, his skull cloven. His companion, quicker of wit, leaped back, drawing his own blade. He struck even as Rezin smote a second time.

"Up to that time," said Brother Juan, "the story appears to be substantiated by known facts. A landing party dispatched by the Spanish Captain in pursuit of the fleeing pirates, found the bodies of the monks and reconstructed the crime. They found, also, the bodies of two pirates. One was positively identified as Rezin himself. He had been dead but a short while. Of the second no trace was found. Nor was there any trace of the treasure chest. Rezin bore two wounds, neither of which would have been immediately fatal. One was an undoubted cutlass slash, the other such an injury as would be inflicted by glancing grapeshot."

"Looks like the second sailor did for Rezin and packed off the gold," Wayne commented.

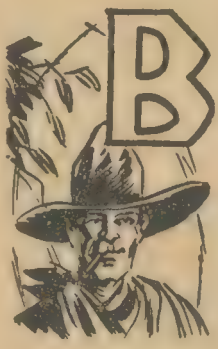
"Yes," agreed Brother Juan. "But at that point began the legend of Rezin's gold. According to the legend, the second sailor fell when Rezin struck him, not dead, as Rezin thought, but only stunned by the blow his thick skull turned.

"When he regained consciousness, many hours later, Rezin was dead, as was his companion. The treasure chest had vanished. Badly hurt, the sailor fled the Mission. He found sanctuary with a tribe of friendly *Indios* and escaped on a ship that put into the bay for water.

"Many years later, when he lay dying, he told the story to a man who had befriended him, and gave him a crude map of the locality. He said that Rezin must have hidden the pirate loot nearby before he died, and that it was a very great treasure. Thus began the search for Rezin's gold, which never has been found."

CHAPTER IV

Price Of Charity



BROTHER Juan was an excellent story-teller and Jim Wayne had listened to the tale with intense interest. When the anchorite had finished speaking, the two men sat for several moments in silence. Then Wayne spoke.

"Quite a yarn all right," he chuckled. "But where does the part about Rezin's ghost come in?"

Brother Juan smiled. "There is where legend becomes pure fantasy. Men who, searching for the gold, have slept here in the old Mission claim to have seen the ghost of Rezin. Always it is the same, with eyes streaming tears, face twisted with anguish, hands imploring. 'The treaure is mine to give,' it says. 'I paid for it with the substance of my soul. Because of it I cannot find rest. I cannot sleep within my grave. Take it, but use it not selfishly, or the curse will rest upon you also. Take it, share it with others, help the needy. Then the burden of my sin will be lightened, and I will find rest.' "

"And doesn't it give directions how the gold is to be found?" Wayne asked.

Brother Juan smiled again. "That would spoil the story, would it not?" he replied. "No, those to whom the ghost appears always flee in terror before the directions are forthcoming."

"'Fraid I don't set much store by ghosts and such like," Wayne said with a chuckle. "It would be interestin' to meet up with this one, though. I've a notion I wouldn't be over scairt of it."

"He whose heart is clean has no cause to fear," Brother Juan replied gravely. "With that, and a humble and contrite

spirit, one can show front to all the Powers of Darkness."

"You ever look for the treasure, *Padre?*" Wayne asked.

"I poked about some, when I first came here," Brother Juan admitted, his smile self deprecating. "Since I took up my abode here, other men have come on the same errand. Just recently two men were here who seemed to think I might possess information relative to the matter, but I convinced them that I knew no more than did they.

"I would like to find that gold, if there is any; which I doubt," he added, his fine eyes thoughtful.

"Why?" Wayne asked, curiously "Yuh don't strike me as the sort of a feller who'd care over much for a heap of dinero."

"I would use it to restore this old Mission to its former glory," Brother Juan replied. "There is much need of such an institution. Many families are ignorant and in want. It was my dream when I came here from *Mejico*. But the Order to which I belong is poor, with no money to spare. So I do what I can, little enough though it is, and trust that the future may bring greater opportunity."

Jim Wayne nodded, his own eyes thoughtful. "Sure hope yuh manage to tie onto that hidden gold sometime, *Padre,*" he said. "If yuh did, I've a notion that Rezin robber wouldn't have any trouble sleepin' again. But I'm of the notion that pirate gent who lived through the shindig packed it off with him when he hightailed."

"Yes, that is my opinion also," Brother Juan admitted.

Jim Wayne passed the remainder of the night very comfortable. When he awoke, full daylight was streaming through the high windows and Brother Juan was already astir.

"I treated and bound your *caballo's* injured leg," said the old man. "He will take no permanent harm, and soon the swelling should be abated."

A basin, a cake of course soap and a bucket of cool water on a nearby bench afforded Wayne a refreshing wash-up. He smoothed his thick black hair, dusted off his clothes and strolled to the outer door of the building. He glanced out, and stepped back very quickly. Five men were riding the trail from the east.

As he gripped the butts of his guns, Brother Juan touched his arm.

"What is it, my son?" he asked.

"Those fellers you see are the ones who are trailin' me, headin' this way," Wayne replied. "Mighty liable to stop here for a look-see. 'Pears to be showdown."

"Wait," Brother Juan said. "I prefer no bloodshed. Retire to the inner room, my son, and let me take care of the matter."

"Okay," Wayne agreed. "Can't do no harm, and there's always time to die."

INSIDE the room, the door ajar, he waited. Brother Juan had meanwhile seated himself on a block of stone just outside the building. Wayne heard the approaching hoofbeats still.

"Well, here's where Brother Juan has a chance to tie onto some of the dinero he's wantin'," the cowboy muttered, "that is if he hankers to cash in on my reward."

A rough voice rang out: "Howdy, *Padre?* Happen to see a big galoot on a red horse ride past this mornin'?"

"*Buenas Dias, Senores.* No one has ridden past this morning." Brother Juan's voice sounded tranquil.

"Wouldn't hardly have seed him if he rode past durin' the night?" the other voice added.

"The night was very dark and stormy," Brother Juan answered, stating an obvious fact.

"That's plumb right," the other growled. "Reckon the hellion is somewhere ahead of us, though. The blasted rain washed out any tracks he might have left. But we'll get the blasted killer! So long."

The hoofbeats went onward, fading into the west. Jim Wayne drew a deep breath. He was suddenly very ashamed of the thought to which he had given voice a moment before.

"Reckon there's real men in the world, after all," he muttered. "Hope the day will come when I'll be as real as that old *Padre.*"

Brother Juan was smiling as he entered the room a moment later.

"I spoke only the truth," he remarked, "even though the intent may have been to deceive. I think," he added, "that at times a small deception may be permissable."

"Sure helped me off a spot," Wayne

returned gratefully. "Hope the day will come, *Padre*, when I can even the score."

"One never knows," Brother Juan replied. "A kindness sometimes reaps a strange and unlooked for reward."

Wayne had intended remaining at the Mission house but a few days, but the Fates ordered otherwise. Brother Juan paid a price for his errand of mercy through the driving rain.

The following day he was coughing badly and running a fever. He grew steadily worse as the day progressed and finally Wayne insisted that he go to bed. All night Wayne waited on the sick man, and all the next day.

"Somethin' has got to be done," he told Brother Juan that evening. "I've got to get somebody, who knows what he's doin' to look after yuh."

"There is an old Indian woman living in a cabin two miles to the west," Brother Juan replied. "She is a good nurse and I am sure she will be glad to come and help. Only I do not like to have you risk venturing out to seek her, my son."

"I'll wait until it is dark," Wayne said. "Don't figger I'll be takin' much of a chance then."

Wayne located the Indian woman's cabin with no difficulty. She proved to be very ancient. Her face was the color of well worn saddle leather and she had more wrinkles than a worried prune, but her beady black eyes were bright and her movements sprightly.

She readily agreed to come to the Mission house and care for the sick man. Once installed there, she quickly took charge, ministering to Brother Juan with stolid efficiency, plying him with shrewd native remedies.

But toward evening of the day after her arrival she drew Wayne aside.

"No good," she said. "No get better. Get worse. Need um doctor."

"Where is there one?" Wayne asked.

"Town six miles along trail to west," old Marie replied. "Doctor there. He come. You go get um?"

"I'll get him," Wayne answered. He knew he was taking a chance in entering the town, but it couldn't be helped.

"Can't let the *Padre* down," he told himself. "He'd do as much for me, or more, if necessary. Besides, may not be takin' so much of a chance, after all. Pill rollers ain't much on talkin' when they're called on business. Even if he does spot me, he'll probably keep his mouth shut."

Without saying anything to Brother Juan, he saddled Rojo and rode west as soon as it was dark. He knew the old man would try to dissuade him if he told him what he had in mind.

MEANWHILE, although Jim Wayne didn't know it, things were happening in Chapin. Jesse and Sime Harlow sat in the sheriff's office and held heated debate with Sheriff John Armstrong. Jesse had a bandaged arm, Sime a bandaged shoulder. Their wounds had not proved serious, but were painful, which did not improve their tempers.

"I tell yuh, Jesse, yuh got to pull in your horns," the sheriff was saying. "If yuh don't, there's the makin's of big trouble for all of us in this fool business. The district is sort of fed up with the way you fellers have been runnin' things. That ruckus in the Bull's Head was just about the last knot in the steer's tail. There were witnesses to that shootin'—men who don't belong to our bunch.

"They say Cole got just what was comin' to him. Old Chet Ulrich, of the Cross C, is rarin' and chargin', and Chet packs considerable influence. If we get Wayne back here and bring him to trial for downin' Cole, it'll just about blow the lid off. There's not a chance to pack a jury in our favor, and we can't get a conviction any other way."

Jesse Harlow's face set in cold, vindictive lines. His eyes glittered. His mouth was a bloodless slit.

"Yuh figger I'm goin' to let Jim Wayne get away with killin' my brother?" he demanded.

"He did get away with it, didn't he?" the sheriff countered, adding grimly, "and if yuh don't stop swallerforkin', he's liable to get away with a sight more. Use your head, Jesse. Yuh don't usually go off half-cocked this way."

Harlow mastered his passion with an effort. "Well, what do yuh figger to do?" he asked in his cold, metallic voice.

"Call in them fool reward notices," the sheriff replied instantly. "Rec'lect I advised against puttin' 'em out in the first place. Withdraw the charges against Wayne. Admit that Cole went off half-cocked and that Wayne shot in self-defense. That'll cool folks down. Chances are we'll never see Wayne

again, anyhow. Reckon he's in Mexico by now."

"No, he isn't," Harlow contradicted. "He's hidin' out somewhere in the county. I've had men watchin' everywhere. He's still in the hills."

"Call 'em off," the sheriff counselled. "Then mebbe Wayne will slide out and hightail, which is the best thing that could happen.'

Young Sime, wincing as his sore shoulder twinged, growled dissent. Jesse sat silent, his better judgment battling with the vindictive hate that boiled inside him. Suddenly, however, a thought seemed to strike him. His eyes glowed. He cast a half amused, half contemptuous glance at the sheriff, who was busy with some papers.

"John," he said, his voice smooth and oily, "I've a notion yuh're right."

"Say—" young Sime began belligerently, but an agate glance from his brother silenced him.

"Yes," continued Jesse. "Pull in them reward notices. I'll see Judge Parker and tell him we're withdrawin' the charges against Wayne. No sense in buttin' our heads against a corral post."

"Now yuh're talkin' sense," the sheriff applauded. "I'll start the boys after them notices pronto."

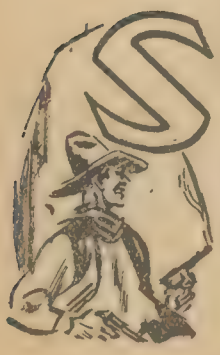
Outside the sheriff's office, young Sime turned on his brother.

"What yuh mean?" he demanded.

"Shut up!" replied Jesse. "There's more ways of skinnin a calf than pullin' the hide off by the tail."

CHAPTER V

Iron Bound Chest



SLIDING into town under cover of darkness, Jim Wayne located the doctor. Together they rode for the ruined Mission house. The doctor spent the night with Brother Juan and by morning he had the fever abated and the patient resting easy.

"He'll do all right now," the doctor, a kindly old man, told Jim Wayne. "It was a narrow squeak with pneumonia, but he'll pull through. But if you hadn't come for me when yuh did, son, it might have had a different ending. You did a good chore, a mighty good chore."

No, the doctor didn't talk, but others saw Jim Wayne ride into town and ride out again. The result was that a few days later a lean little rat of a man with shifty eyes visited Jesse Harlow. He muttered words into Harlow's ear, taking the added precaution of putting his hand to his mouth, although nobody was within hearing distance.

"Yuh're sure he's still there?" Harlow asked the informer.

"Plumb sure, boss," the spy replied, twisting his hat servilely in his hands.

Jesse Harlow's eyes glittered. "Much obliged. Pete," he said. "Keep this quiet. Here, have a drink on me."

The little man ducked out the door, gold clinking in his hand. Jesse turned to young Sime. "Buckle on your hardware," he directed. "We're ridin'."

Sime began to show signs of cold feet. "Suppose somebody catches on?"

"Shut up!"Jesse spat at him. "Nobody's goin' to catch on. We'll see to that. The set-up is perfect. It'll be a cinch. Get your horse."

Thanks to the doctor's skillful ministrations, Brother Juan mended rapidly. Soon he was able to be up and moving about. Old Marie, the Indian nurse, returned to her cabin.

"But I'll stick around for a few days, until yuh get your strength back," Wayne told the old man. "Wouldn't think of leavin' till yuh're plumb able to look after yourself again."

Wayne enjoyed his stay at the Mission, but, accustomed as he was to a life of outdoor activity, he found the confinement irksome at times. To relieve the monotony he took long walks through the chaparral that grew almost to the rear of the old building.

He returned from such a jaunt one evening about ten days after his first meeting with Brother Juan, just as the sun was slanting red rays through the high windows. He entered the stable, whistling merrily, and crossed to the inner door, which stood ajar. He was reaching for the knob when Brother Juan's voice rang forth from the other room: "Beware, my son, beware!"

Followed a startled curse and the boom of a shot. Then the thud of a

falling body, and Brother Juan's voice crying out in pain.

His gray eyes blazing with mad fury, his lips writhed back from his bared teeth in a wolfish grin, Jim Wayne crashed the door open and leaped into the big room, going sideways along the wall in the same movement.

Lying on the floor by the door of his room was Brother Juan. Peering toward him were Sime and Jesse Harlow. Smoke still wisped from the muzzle of Jesse's gun.

The Harlows whirled at the sound of the crashing stable door. Instantly the walls rocked to the roar of guns.

Seconds later Jim Wayne, blood dripping from a bullet creased cheek, one sleeve shot to ribbons, lowered his smoking guns and glared through the fog at the two motionless figures sprawled on the floor. He holstered his Colts and ran to Brother Juan, who was sitting up, rubbing his shoulder.

"I am not hurt, my son, other than a wrenched arm," he replied to Wayne's anxious question. "I threw myself to the floor and the bullet passed over me. I was in my room when I heard them stealthily enter. Instantly I knew they came for no good. Then I heard your whistle, and your step. I cried out to warn you."

"And saved me from takin' the Big Jump," Wayne replied gratefully. "If you hadn't taken a chance on gettin' plugged yourself and yelped, they would have blowed me out from under my hat when I stepped through the door. Well, I'm on the run for fair, now. Three killin's to my credit!"

BROTHER Juan laid a thin hand on his young friend's arm.

"My son," he said, "why run? No matter how far you go, you can never run away from yourself. Always will be the fear of a step behind you, a hand on your shoulder. Because of that fear, more trouble will come to you. Better go back and face it. You have done no wrong. Your conscience is clear. I will go with you and speak in your behalf. My testimony will carry weight. Besides, the Order to which I belong will, at a word from me, stand behind you."

"But, *Padre,*" Wayne objected, "the Harlows run this region. I wouldn't have a chance."

"My son," Brother Juan replied gently, "you seem to forget that there are no longer any Harlows left."

"By gosh!" Wayne exclaimed. "*Padre,* yuh're right! This cleans out the whole nest of sidewinders. Okay, I'll do as yuh say. I'll go back. We'll ride tomorrow, if yuh feel up to it. Now I'll pack these carcasses outside. I'll cover 'em up, so the buzzards don't take a chance on 'em and get themselves pizened."

He lifted Sime Harlow's heavy form, apparently without effort, and bore it away. He returned and performed a like service for Jesse. He glowered disapprovingly at the blood stains on the stone flags.

"Needs cleanin' up a mite," he grunted. He procured a pail of water and a stiff-bristled broom Brother Juan had fashioned. With it he scrubbed industriously at the flags, removing the blood stains and along with them the accumulated dust and silt of many years. Suddenly he paused, peering at the wet stone. "Here's somethin' funny," he exclaimed. "Look, *Padre,* it's a stone ring set in one of the flags. Wonder what it's for?"

"I should say," replied Brother Juan, "that it was used to raise the flag."

"Which means there's somethin' underneath," muttered Wayne. He bent over the ring, plucking at it with his fingers. He took a knife and carefully scraped away the dirt and grit. Then he got the knife blade under the edge of the ring and levered gently.

The ring stirred, rose a trifle: Wayne got a grip on it and pulled it into a vertical position. Being of stone, it had not set firmly in its sunken bed, as would have been the case were it of iron. Wayne took hold of it with both hands and tugged strongly. But the flag resisted his efforts. He took his knife again and scratched around the edge of the flag, digging out the earth that had become imbedded between it and its fellows on either side. Then he gripped the ring again and put forth his strength.

There was a grinding sound, a shifting. The ponderous stone slowly rose from its bed and clattered on the floor as Wayne cast it aside. A dark opening was revealed, and a flight of stone steps leading downward into the gloom.

"Say, this is gettin' interestin'!"

Wayne exclaimed. "*Padre,* fetch the lamp."

Holding the lamp into the opening, they could see that the steps ceased at a stone floor a dozen or so feet below. The air that gushed from the opening was dry and musty. "Suppose we have a look-see,' Wayne suggested.

Together they descended the steps, and found themselves in a wide room constructed under the main floor of the building. On stone shelves showed rows of peculiarly shaped bottles covered with dust. There were rows of barrels along one wall, some with loosened staves within their hoops. There were also what appeared to be wooden bins, and the dusty rags of what might once have been sacks. And on the floor almost at the foot of the stairs rested a stout wooden chest or casket strongly bound with rusty iron.

"*Padre,* do you see it!" Wayne exclaimed excitedly. "I'll bet that old box is Rezin's treasure chest!"

"Doubtless it is," agreed Brother Jaun. "And how obvious is the hiding place. This was the storeroom of the Mission, from which the monk took the food and wine they prepared for Rezin and his companions. Before he died, Rezin doubtless managed to shove the chest down the stairs and drop the flag into place. Here, in the shadow of the alter as it then was, the stone ring, resting in its bed, could easily be overlooked. Later it was covered by dust and debris when treasure seekers pulled the stones of the alter apart."

"Uh-huh, the lid of the chest is all busted, like it had been tumbled down the stairs. Let's see what's inside."

HE PRIED up the shattered lid with his gun barrel. Brother Juan held the lamp close. The light reflected dully from the broad yellow coins with which the chest was filled.

"Doubloons," said Brother Juan, fingering one. "Spanish doubloons. Yes, my son, you have found Rezin's treasure. You are a wealthy man. There is much gold here."

"And to think those two drygulchin' sidewinders were responsible for us findin' it," Wayne marveled. "But it's fifty-fifty, share alike, with us, *Padre.*" With an effort, he tilted the heavy chest, dumped the contents on the floor.

"Too many to count," he muttered. He shaped the heaped coins into two roughly equal piles.

"There's your new Mission, *Padre,*" he said, indicating one heap. He stared at the second heap. Suddenly he grinned boyishly and began separating that also, into two unequal divisions, one much larger than the other. The smaller he drew to one side.

"I don't hanker to have no ghost curse restin' on me," he explained. "This passel over here is all I'll need to buy me a little hunk of land and some cows, some day, so I can get started in business for myself. The rest goes to raise the ante for the new Mission!"

Wayne and Brother Juan rode north the following morning. A pack mule bore the weight of gold.

"We'll just put this dinero in the Chapin bank, where it'll be safe," Wayne said, "but first we'll stop off at the Cross C ranchhouse and see Chet Ulrich."

It was at the Cross C that Wayne learned the charges against him had been withdrawn.

"We'll head straight for town and see Doc Wahl, the coroner," said Ulrich. "Reckon he'll want to hold an inquest."

"I'll hold the inquest right here and now," Doc Wahl decided, when he heard Wayne's story, substantiated by Brother Juan. "Later I'll ride down and look over the carcasses."

The coroner's jury speedily absolved Wayne of any blame in the killing of the Harlows, and commended him for having done a good chore. Later, while he and Brother Juan were eating in a nearby restaurant, Ulrich hurried in with more news.

"Yuh sure busted the Harlows and all their works, Jim," he said. "Judge Parker is resignin' his office, and so is Sheriff Armstrong. I hear the commissioners figger to appoint you to fill out the sheriff's term, if yuh'll take the job. Reckon yuh won't have any opposition when election time comes, either."

Two days later, Brother Juan returned to the old Mission house. He paused in the doorway and glanced about with quiet content as he envisioned the changes that soon would take place. He nodded to the shadows besides the shattered alter and spoke, as to some unseen presence there.

"At last," he said, "you can sleep!"

A True Crime Story by LUTHER LOCKE

Sharp found what remained of the lovely Evangeline

CLUE of the MISSING ARM

The lone horseman on the Arizona desert trail found evidence of foul play—and sought a brutal killer!

THE lone horseman pulled up his mount and shading his eyes against the blazing desert sun, gazed long and steadily to the south. Far away, against the cloudless, azure blue Arizona sky he saw dark specks, wheeling, dipping out of his line of vision, then reappearing.

"Buzzards," he muttered, turning his horse in their direction and spurring the animal to a faster pace.

To his practised eye in estimating dis-

tances in the desert, Roy Sharp guessed the great birds were circling over some spot about ten miles distant, where carrion lay.

As the tireless lope of his cow pony put the miles behind, Sharp's thoughts turned again to the mysterious events of the past month. For four straight weeks now he had been riding the desert, always searching some some sign of his sweetheart, Evangeline Bernard, who had ridden away from her father's, Joe Bernard's, ranch one morning and had been swallowed up in the vastness of the Arizona desert.

Girl Rides Away

Evangeline, educated in the East but born to the desert and an accomplished horsewoman, was 21, beautiful, brunette and fearless. She knew the Santa Ritas Mountains, near her home, and the range within a radius of twenty miles as well as the friendliness of the home ranch her father owned.

The morning she disappeared, she had waved a cheery *adios* to several cow hands near the corrals. When she failed to return that night there was not too much worry about her, because she had stayed out alone many times before. But with the passing of the second day, searching parties had gone out, fearing she might have been thrown from her horse and injured. The fact the mount had not returned to the ranch brought the belief he had stepped in a hole and perhaps broken a leg, injuring the young woman when he fell.

But the days had passed and not a trace of the animal or its rider had been found. Sheriff George Lester had been advised and with a posse of deputies and neighboring ranchers, not a foot of the desert for miles around had been left unsearched. Finally the lawmen had abandoned the search, believing Evangeline had purposely ridden away and eventually would return.

But Sharp thought he knew better. So each day he penetrated into the remote areas. Now he was in the wild, barren Coyote Springs country and as he neared the location over which the buzzards wheeled, he felt a tenseness, as of impending tragedy and he wondered what he would find.

A Gruesome Discovery

Presently he saw ahead what appeared to be the carcass of a large animal. It could have been a cow, a black-tailed deer or a horse. As he neared, the buzzards rose from the carrion with a clatter of flapping wings, but hovered near as though reluctant to abandon their feast.

Dismounting, Sharp walked to the bones, now almost stripped bare, and saw it was the remains of a horse. Then he saw the saddle—Evangeline's—and his throat constricted. Momentarily he was speechless, terrified at what he was sure he would find nearby, but praying it would not be so. He was surprised to find the animal had been tied to a dwarfed liveoak, which accounted for it not returning home. It obviously had starved or died of thirst.

Cautiously now he pushed his way through a patch of liveoaks and about 50 feet distant saw whitened bones and fragments of torn clothing.

There was no mistake about it, he had found what remained of the lovely Evangeline after the desert scavengers had got through with her. Nearby, were a pair of leather boots Sharp himself had given her. He recognized bits of cloth as being from one of her favorite riding habits.

Small Silver Cross

Shocked at what he had found and beside himself with grief at the fate of the girl had hoped to marry, Sharp started back to his horse. On the way, something bright in the sand attracted his attention and he stooped and picked up a small silver crucifix. Examining it closely he saw the right arm of the Christ was broken off.

Sharp was puzzled at first because he knew the Bernards were not of the Catholic faith and he never had seen Evangeline wearing or carrying a religious emblem of any kind. Then his thoughts turned to the possibility of a Mexican, most of whom he knew to be religious and superstitious, being the murderer of the girl and the owner of the crucifix.

The man put the trinket in his pocket, mounted quickly and spurred his horse to a canter. Three hours later he reached the Bernard ranch and told his story.

It was too late that evening to round

up a posse and return to bring in the remains of the dead girl, but at sunup the next day Sheriff Lester, Chief Deputy John Mittlestadt, the girl's father and cowhands from the ranch followed Sharp to the lonely, isolated spot where he had made his shocking discovery.

Bones Are Scattered

The victim's bones had been scattered by the desert scavengers, but positive identification was made by her father when he, with the sheriff, examined her kull. Evangeline had a gold tooth in the back of her mouth and they also found a signet ring in the sand nearby that had been hers.

Examination of the skull showed that a small caliber bullet had entered the head at the top of the neck and taken an upward course into the brain.

Reconstructing the murder, Sheriff Lester figured Evangeline had dismounted and tied her horse and then, for some reason had walked through the scrubby growth of liveoak and was in a kneeling position when the fatal shot was fired.

But why should she tie her mount where there was no spring? Why had she dismounted anyway? More than that why had she been riding in such a desolate and out of the way place to begin with?

These were things the sheriff would have to answer eventually if he was to solve the crime, but at the moment he helped the others collect the scattered bones in a blanket, secure them to a horse, after which the party started back to the ranch.

Before leaving, the sheriff had examined the soil for many yards around the spot where the remains of the slain girl and her horse were found, but the elements had long since obliterated any tracks there once might have been.

On reaching the ranch, Sharp called Joe Bernard and the sheriff aside and showed them the broken crucifix he had found. He explained he never had seen the girl wear such a thing. Neither had her father nor any of the ranch hands with whom Evangeline had always been friendly.

Sheriff Suspects Sharp

When Sheriff Lester started putting together the pieces of the murder puzzle, there were several circumstances that disturbed him. Questioning of all hands at the ranch disclosed none had been away from the place during the 24 hours during which the girl had disappeared and the time the first searching party started out.

Sharp, on the other hand, said he had been in Phoenix that day and had not returned to his father's ranch, adjoining Bernard's, until the following day. He said he had been a witness at a civil trial in the state capital, having been called there by subpoena.

Evangeline never had been seen riding with anyone unknown to her father or the cowhands, nor had anyone seen any strangers on the range for a matter of several weeks. It also was known the girl had no close associations at any time with men other than Sharp and the boys employed by her father.

Sheriff Lester began to wonder, also, how it had come about that Sharp had been able to find the remains of the girl when the many searching parties had failed. Why, he asked himself, did Sharp think of looking in the Coyote Springs country, a place no one knowing the young woman, ever would have suspected her to go?

Sharp Is Questioned

The sheriff lost no time in calling the young man aside and questioning him about these matters.

"And what about that crucifix?" he asked, a suspicious tone in his voice. "Why didn't you tell us about it last night?"

Sharp flushed and looked embarrassed. "To tell you the truth, Sheriff, I forgot all about it, I was so upset and excited."

Lester let it pass with the explanation the young man had given, turning the questioning to why he had thought to look for the girl in the place she had been found.

"Well, Sheriff, I'd looked everywhere else, so I thought I'd go there before giving up. You see I have been on the trail for a month, going into every inaccessible spot where Evangeline might have strayed . I knew she didn't know that back country very well and I thought maybe she had been hurt and become lost."

That night the coroner arrived and when he examined the skull he recov-

ered the lethal bullet, which turned out to be a 22 caliber. He verified the sheriff's belief the bullet had entered at the base of the skull and taken an upward course, indicating the killer had been standing on the ground while his victim was seated in the saddle, and fired upward, or that the girl had been on her hands and knees or prone on the ground and the killer had stood over her when he fired the shot.

Sheriff Checks Story

The next day Sheriff Lester sent Mittlestadt to Phoenix to check on Sharp's story about being a witness at a trial on the day the girl disappeared. When he returned, he was able to corroborate the claim of the young man and also had learned Sharp had stayed at a hotel that night and had been recognized by several persons when he checked out the following morning.

This, of course, completely exonerated Sharp of any suspicion in the killing, which never was held by Evangeline's father, anyway, nor any of the ranch hands.

The investigation appeared to be an impossible one to conclude satisfactorily. Except for the broken crucifix, there were no clues on which the sheriff could work. Therefore, after two weeks of questioning people around the desert who knew the girl, Lester gave up the task, listing the case as an unolved murder.

But Sharp, grieving for his lost sweetheart and his wrath increasing that he ever should have been suspected, determined he would never rest until he had brought the murderer of Evangeline Bernard to justice. He still had the broken crucifix, the sheriff had not regarded as important in the case, and he decided that through it, there was a chance that some day the crime could be solved. So, with a prayer in his heart and a vow on his lips that he would spend the rest of his life, if necessary, running down the murderer, he started to think out a plan for tracing the little religious emblem to its owner.

Sharp Starts Search

Sharp knew that men rarely wore crucifixes; that they were usually owned and carried by women. This led him to wonder if possibly Evangeline could have had a woman enemy who might have followed her into the desert and slain her. But he doubted the girl ever had a secret lover over whom one of the hot-headed Mexican women who lived near the Border would have been jealous of, and he knew there was no woman he ever had known who might have been jealous of himself. Still, he didn't abandon jealousy as a possible motive for the crime.

Eventually he decided to visit the Tumacocari Mission, near Nogales on the Border, talk with some of the padres and show them the crucifix, hoping perhaps one of them might be able to identify it. Revealing his plan to Joe Bernard, who told him to go to any lengths or expense he chose to find the murderer of his daughter and that he would pay all the costs, Sharp set out a week later.

His visit to the Mission proved of little avail. The fathers had not seen the crucifix, which was of an unusual design they said they certainly would have remembered. But one old priest suggested he call on Senor Juan Mendez, a silversmith and merchant, who operated a store in Nogales, Mexico. He recalled the merchant often handled unusual pieces and that he might remember this one had he ever seen it.

Silversmith Recognizes Cross

Sharp found Mendez in his shop. He realized he must move shrewdly, because these Mexicans sometimes were very loyal to each other and he feared if he made it known he was searching for a murderer who had owned the crucifix, the merchant would refuse to give any information. So he decided to go into the shop with the pretense he wanted the arm of the Christ repaired. Then, by clever questioning, he might learn if Mendez had ever seen the emblem before.

"Yes, Senor?" the Mexican inquired, a friendly smile on his swarthy face.

Sharp held out the crucifix. "Can you repair this for me?" he asked, pointing to the broken arm.

The merchant took it and examined it closely, first with the naked eye, then with a glass.

"How strange," he said finally. "You are the second person from over the Border who has brought this same piece

to me to be repaired within the year."

So startled was Sharp by this statement he was unable to conceal his astonishment. Before he could reply, Mendez noticing his excitement, said: "Perhaps you know the other senor, or maybe he sends you back to me with it?"

Crucifix Was Work of Art

Recovering his presence of mind, the young man said he did not know the former owner; that he had found the crucifix and liked it so much he had determined to have it repaired. The padre at the Mission had sent him, he said.

"Then I must tell you the same as I told the other one. It is too bad, but I do not have the facilities to do this kind of work. I would have to send it away and it would take several weeks at best," Mendez purred in flawless English with just a faint accent. "The American who had it before you, said he could not wait that long and left."

"An American, you say?" asked Sharp.

"*Si*, senor. Surely an American, but perhaps with a bit of Latin blood. He was young and dark and handsome and he spoke Spanish as fluently as he did English. But he seemed in a great hurry. I never saw him before or since in these parts."

"How do you happen to remember this crucifix is the same one this stranger had?" asked Sharp.

"Ah, one in my art could not forget. See?" He pointed to the peculiar manner in which the Christ's arm was broken off. "It could not happen that way twice. And beside, this is a piece of unusual design." The suave Mexican held it up admiringly. "I could sell it for a handsome price."

Feeling certain he would obtain no further information from Mendez and still not wishing to disclose his real reason for seeking the owner of the crucifix, Sharp left the store and returned to Nogales in Arizona.

On the trip back across the Border he felt somewhat encouraged because at least he had picked up a fair description of the owner of the trinket. A young man, Mendez had said, dark and handsome, who spoke English and Spanish equally well. He now had some idea of whom he was looking for, even though he knew there were many dark young men along the border who spoke both English and Spanish.

A few days later in Nogales, Arizona, where he had been hanging around saloons and the meeting places of cowhands, he happened to overhear a conversation in which the speaker told a ribald joke in English, then repeated it for the benefit of some Mexicans in the group, in Spanish.

Immediately Sharp looked around and his eyes fell on a tall, handsome young man with dark hair. Moving quietly to the bar, he ordered a drink and began fingering the crucifix, finally letting it drop on the shining mahogany near the speaker, as if it were an accident. He was slow in picking it up, hoping the fellow would get a good look at it. The plan worked.

The fellow's eyes widened as he saw it. "Is that yours, mister?" he asked in in perfect English.

"Sure is," Sharp replied. "Why?"

"Nothing. It just looked like one I once owned. It was given me by my mother years ago."

That Broken Arm

He seemed about to turn back to his companions, but hesitated and held out his hand. "May I look at it?"

Examining it closely, he finally handed it back to Sharp with a sigh. "It is the same one. I recognize it by the broken arm. See?" He pointed to the peculiar break Mendez had mentioned.

"Would you sell it to me?"

Sharp hardly could disguise his elation.

"Perhaps," he said. "But first drink with me and tell me how you came to lose it and where."

The two men moved to the end of the bar.

"It was a year ago," the stranger, who said his name was Joe Marion, started.

"My mother had given it to me just before she died and told me never to lose it. It had brought me luck always. Then one night in Nogales across the border, I was having bad luck in a poker game and I thought if I played it against cash, it would change my fortune. But it didn't. I lost it."

Thinking quickly, Sharp asked: "Do you remember who won it?"

"Yes, I was playing with Joe Lopez, Frank Terrazas and a Senor Hidalgo. It was Hidalgo who won it and when I offered to buy it back from him, he laughed and refused."

Telling Marion he would think it over and perhaps he would sell it, Sharp left the saloon and headed back for the Mexican side. In Nogales he learned where he could find Hidalgo, a well-known merchant and sportsman and soon he was talking to the man in his shop. "Did you ever see this little crucifix?" he asked.

Hidalgo gave one look and asked excitedly: "Where did you get that?"

As the Mexican reached for the emblem, Sharp closed his hand on it.

"Just a minute, senor. First tell me what you know about it."

Presently, Hidalgo was relating the story of how the crucifix came into his possession. H esaid he had won it more than a year before in a game from Marion, who was well known as a gambler in the Mexican town. The fellow wanted to buy it back, but he had refused to sell it. A week later he had been calling on his friend, Frank Hudson, a wealthy rancher on the American side, near Casa Grande, and when Hudson's young daughter had seen it she had taken such a fancy to it, he had made her a present of it.

Later, he told Sharp, he had seen Hudson on one of the rancher's frequent trips to Mexico, and Hudson had told him a cow hand in his employ, whom he had been obliged to discharge because he bothered his two lovely young daughters, had stolen it along with five hundred dollars before he left.

Real Story Is Disclosed

As Sharp listened, he realized the picture was now beginning to take form and the pieces of the puzzle were falling into place. He asked Hidalgo more about Hudson, then decided to tell the Mexican the real story of his mission. When he had finished, the Mexican offered to go with him to the Hudson ranch and to help him find the man the ranched had fired, but whose name he didn't know.

Two days later, Sharp and Hidalgo arrived at the Hudson ranch. When he heard the story of the murder of Evangeline Bernard, Hudson's face blanched through the bronze of exposure to sun and wind.

He swore softly. "It might have been one of my daughters the skunk killed!"

Hudson said the fellow's name was Fred Hastings and that he had discharged him more than six months previously. He verified the fact that he had stolen the crucifix and money the night he left the ranch.

Sure of his ground now, Sharp thanked both Hidalgo and the rancher for their help, and set out alone, determined to find Hastings if he still was in the country.

But first he went to Sheriff Lester and told him what he had discovered. The officer listened and when he heard Hastings name spoken, he said:

"We know that fellow. He's wanted for a robbery and shooting in Cochise. Leave everything to me now and we'll pick him up if we have to plaster the whole United States with his picture and description."

Sheriff Arrests Killer

But that was unnecessary. Within a week, the sheriff had picked up the fellow's trail as he was heading for Phoenix and two days later, Phoenix officers arrested him in a saloon.

At first Hastings denied murdering Evangeline Bernard, attempting to cop a plea by pleading guilty to the robbery. But when taken back to the scene of the crime and shown the broken crucifix, he broke down and confessed.

He said he had met Evangeline on the desert and when she told him she was searching for some cattle, he had offered to help her find them, saying he had seem some strays in a canyon in the Coyote Springs country a day or two before. Then, when they reached the lonely area, he had attempted to make love to the girl. When she jumped off her horse and slapped him, he had knocked her down, then as she was attempting to arise, he drew his 22 caliber revolver and shot her.

In the scuffle he had lost the crucifix, which he admitted stealing from the Hudson ranch.

Fred Hastings was charged with first degree murder, tried in the June 1914 term of court and when convicted he was sentenced to life in the Arizona Territorial Prison.

The red stallion bucked hard, and Lang flew out of the saddle

By HAROLD R. STOAKES

The Red Stallion

Whether taming horses or men, it's gentleness that can always conquer!

ONLY one man ever rode the red stallion. Dave Smoker rode him often, bareback and halter free, across the Wyoming grasslands.

Adam Smoker set saddle on him in the Double B corral, but only for a little while. Adam was the greatest rider north Wyoming ever seen. Folks used to say there wasn't the studhorse born that Adam couldn't tame with a whip and a spur and a club. But the red killer sunfished high, spilling Adam like a rock. Unshod hoofs crushed into Adam's back. It took four of us with pitchforks and quirts to drive the giant devil back across the corral.

Adam lived, but he never walked again. There was talk of shooting the big stallion, but nothing was done. Afterwards, toward dusk, Dave slipped down to the corral and sneaked lumps of sugar between the bars. He come back every night, talking softly and rubbing the stallion's nose.

Dave bore Adam Smoker's name, but he wasn't Adam's son. Dave's ma was a widow of only a few months when she married Adam. Dave was born just short months later. There wasn't no doubt but what it was the son of a man in his grave come to everlastingly remind Adam that he was second best in Lily Smoker's life.

I was thinking about that and a heap of other things one day, six months after Adam was hurt. The Wyoming sky was glassy still, with the sun standing dollar bright straight overhead. My face was as prickly red as a singed chicken. The doors of the Double B tool shed were flung open. I ambled up toward the shed to get in the shade.

Dave had the hood up on the battered pickup. He was scraping carbon off a spark plug. I glanced at Adam's black sedan, blocked off its wheels the way it had been since Adam was hurt.

"Goin' to the town dance tonight, Dave?" I asked.

"Maybe, Pops, if I can get the truck fixed." Dave stuck the spark plug in the car and fiddled with the motor's innards.

I kind of grinned. Word had got around that Dave had fell plumb hard for one of them town girls.

"You should bring that filly around," I said.

DAVE didn't turn his head, nor speak, and I knowed almost at once it was the wrong thing to say. Adam wasn't the sociable kind even before the red stallion crippled him. Now he was worse, sitting out his days in a wheelchair on the ranch house porch—staring for hours at the red stallion down in the corral, but never moving a finger to pick up the Winchester that lay beside him.

I angled a glance at Dave. Dave had grown up into a small man—compact as a sand burr and as nimble as a quirt. His hair and his eyes were lamp wick black. He had a habit of sliding his eyes sideways in their sockets. Like Adam, Dave didn't believe in wasting a motion of the head just to see the things that weren't plumb straight ahead of him.

I pushed thoughts of Adam into the back of my head and leaned against the wall of the shed, fanning my whiskers with my hat. The smell of grease and oil gagged me some. The flattish smell of thick cigar smoke mingled in.

I turned my head as Lang Winters stuck his boot up on the running board of the car. Lang had been working for the Double B for nearly a week. He was still feeling his way along on things.

"You going to town for fence wire?" Lang asked. "The south range needs fixing bad."

Dave didn't comment. Lang's gaze lingered along the shaky length of the old truck.

"You plan to fix the south range fence line soon?" Lang asked.

"Hadn't given it much thought," Dave said.

"Yah." Lang stretched up like he was yawning. "I guess maybe it's something Adam would have to decide."

I stared at Dave, a mite mad. Dave had given thought to that south fence. I'd heard him talking 'bout it to Adam no more than a couple of days before, but Adam never put much stock in what Dave said. Adam liked to keep a tight rein on ranch say-so.

Lang shifted his leg down from the running board. Even then his levis stretched tight about his big legs and bit in close around his waist. Sometimes I wondered if Lang didn't buy his pants a mite too small on purpose. His chest flared up like the body of a kite, and his shoulders were plank square. Lang's nostrils were wide, and his hair was bleached out to a stubble white. He stood a head taller than Dave as he inhaled thick cigar smoke and let it drain down through his nostrils.

"Things are getting seedy with Adam laying up on the porch. If it was my place, I'd run things different."

Dave didn't look around, but his eyes scooted sideways.

"Yes, Lang," Dave said quietly. "I guess maybe you'd run things different."

I didn't like the way Dave said it. Lang teetered on his boot heels, gazing out past the shadowed front of the tool shed. The red stallion stood midway of the corral, with the poles making a striped shadow against his body.

"Don't make sense to feed a horse that ain't broke to saddle," Lang drawled. "I just figure to ride that critter one day."

Dave turned his head then, slowly.

"Stay away from the red horse," Dave said shortly. "If Adam couldn't ride him, you haven't got a chance."

There was a sight of horse sense to Dave's words. Adam had broke more horses to saddle than most men ever see. Lang blew smoke along the dusty back end of the car and miled.

"Just because Adam got tumbled is no reason for other men to be scared," Lang said.

I fumed. Dave could ride the red devil any day he choose. I waited to see what he would do or say, but Dave just wiped the flaked spark plug dust off his hands, picked up the tools, and walked up to the ranchhouse.

I DIDN'T do much work that afternoon, mulling things over like I was —cussing Adam, and sometimes itching to boot Dave right where it would do the most good.

Dave's ma was named Lily Driscoll before she married Adam. Dave was six, mebbe seven, when Lily run away, leaving him a few worn out duds and an old family Bible she couldn't of spent much time in reading. After that there was just Adam to look after Dave, and Adam raised the boy without sparing the rod.

I've seen men sit around the bunkhouse on a Sunday morning cracking their knuckles white, knowing that no one had a right to interfefe with another man and his kin. Adam had an old stage coach whip, with the hard handle of it cut away, so that every inch of that whip writhed out of his hand like a snake.

He beat the boy in the open corral so that any man could watch, but no cowpuncher ever did. When he was done he'd give the boy Lily's Bible to read. Adam never let Dave forget that he was another man's child, and that his ma had run away.

It was one time when Dave was 'bout half grown and I figured maybe he had run away, too, that I seen him ride the red stallion. I had gone looking for Dave. I reined up short when I seen him standing in the middle of the creek, trying to wash the welted pain out of his back.

The sky was gun powder gray with a strong wind bending the thick willows by the creek. The red horse come down into the thicket. The wind was blowing t'other way, and the big stallion was almost atop Dave before seeing him. The red killer shied back, r'aring on hind legs. I was ready to slam my boots into my cow pony, afraid that Dave would be slashed down. Something stopped me.

The red horse dropped his legs and nosed toward Dave. Dave put his arms up around the stallion's neck. I could see Dave was cryin'. Finally he pulled himself up onto the horse's back and rode away, holding tight to the mane. After that I seen Dave ride the giant devil often, but I never told. It was years before Adam or anyone else got within lasso range of the stallion.

I mosied around the rest of that hot afternoon, tryin' to look busy without doin' too much work. When supper time come there was just the four of us to eat the grub I had fixed.

Dave kept his eyes on his plate most of the time. I knew the pickup wasn't runnin' and he wouldn't be going to the dance. Lang ate gustily, talkin' all the time, and glancin' now and again at Dave. I was watching Adam, but Adam kept his eyelids pulled down.

Adam's a small man, like Dave, but with a pig's thickness to his body, and the weightiness of clubs to the drape of his arms. Adam's forehead is bull calf square, and his eyes close set and small.

"Lang tells me the south fence needs mendin', Dave," Adam said. "If Lang thinks it's bad, you better tend to it."

Dave flushed. "I'll see that it's fixed," he said.

"And about that red horse." Lang paused, with a sizable chunk of beef forked halfway to his mouth. "You don't aim to feed a horse that don't work, do you?"

Dave raised his head a little. Adam's face went hard. He glanced at Lang, but when he spoke it was softly, and he was looking straight at Dave.

"No one's going to ride the stallion—ever," Adam said.

I guessed something then for the first time. Adam knowed that Dave could ride the red horse. It was no secret between them, nor was the reason Adam kept the Winchester alongside him on the porch railing a secret either. The day Dave rode the red killer, Adam

would pick up his rifle. There wasn't much way of telling which would die—maybe Dave and the horse. Adam wasn't going to let another man ride the stallion that had thrown him.

DAVE moved his tongue around his lips, the way he was a habit of doing. Lang crimsoned, knowing he had spoke out of turn. Adam started eating again, as though nothing had been said.

"You goin' into the dance, Lang?" Adam asked.

"If I can borrow a horse," Lang said.

Adam looked swiftly at Dave and Lang. He rolled his wheel-chair back an inch from the table and fumbled in his vest pocket. He flung a key half way across the table.

"Take the sedan and have yourself a time, Lang. You might meet one of them town girls to take ridin'. I hear tell they're pretty." Adam flicked a glance at Dave. "Me and Dave's got a heap of paper work to get done tonight."

I stared at the key that Adam always kept stuffed in his vest pocket. Dave pushed his chair back carefully. He stood up, looking at Adam and Lang—each separately—before he turned.

"I'll be on the porch when you want me, Adam," Dave said.

When supper was over I followed after Dave, blazing mad. There comes a time when a man has to fight. Dave had the Double B to run, and no help a doin' it. A man has to stick up for himself. Dave was of age. He didn't need to take Adam's abuse. I aimed to tell Dave that.

Dave stood by the porch railing, looking across the duskiness toward the pole corral and the shadow of the red stallion's head. The sedan snorted out of the tool shed with a squealing lurch of its springs. Lang's laughter cut across the ranch yard as the sedan lights stabbed toward the hill. Dave didn't turn his head.

"Do you think Adam could of ridden the red horse if he had tried it a different way?" Dave asked softly.

Anger welled up inside of me. Adam Smoker never had but one way of breaking horses, or men—with a spur, a whip, and a club.

"What kind of way?" I grunted.

"A gentle way, maybe?" Dave mused.

"I dunno," I said shortly.

"Maybe Adam will learn," Dave said.

Dave was still talking softly, staring into the darkness, talking as though he were asking questions, though I sensed the answers were already figured out in his head. I seen Dave's face as he turned, and I shivered.

"Adam was a great horseman, but he never knew horses," Dave said.

I figured then that I knew what Dave planned to do. Adam was touchy proud of the fact that no horse had ever thrown him until the red stallion come along. "If Adam couldn't ride him, you haven't got much chance," Dave had said to Lang. It sounded like Dave was sticking up for Adam, but I guessed it wasn't that. Dave would help build the legend that Adam was a great rider. Dave would leave the red stallion in the corral for months, while the talk got whispered around that no one dared saddle the giant devil that nigh killed Adam Smoker.

When the proper time was come, Dave would ride the red horse so gently and easily that folks would look at Adam questioningly. Dave would show that a mite of gentleness and love could conquer where Adam's whip had failed. Folks would say the same thing that Dave had said, stripping Adam clean when he couldn't fight back. A man's pride is a touchy thing when it's all he has left.

Thinking about it, I felt sorry for Adam—until I remembered the hissing of a silk-wound whip. Dave had waited a long time.

I WAS restless that night. Adam and Dave worked late. I tried to busy myself with a busted saddle in the bunkhouse, waiting for the slashing of the sedan's lights from across the hill.

I got to living over things in the past. Like the time Dave brung his ma's Bible into the bunkhouse, puzzled. Dave was nine then, but quick as a toad. Dave never did have an awkward age, like a lot of younguns.

"'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.'" Dave had looked up, puzzled. "What does it mean, Pops?"

I can't say I ever went in for that stuff, or believed in it, but I tried to explain the best I could.

"I reckon maybe that goes for horses, too," Dave said slowly.

"Horses?" I didn't understand.

"I mean." Dave swallowed, thinking slowly. "A thing that can be hit like that, on both sides even, you hadn't ought to hit at all."

I had to snub-rein my thoughts and bring them around to the side of things where Dave was doing his thinking. Dave had the Book spread across his bony knees.

"I mean—maybe—love—" Dave hesitated.

Anger coiled up like a rattler inside me. My own husky voice sounded a warning like its buttons. I figured Dave was thinking of Adam's stolid way of walking down to the corral with the whip in his hand.

"Yah, Dave," I said, knowing I couldn't argue agin the Book. "I reckon love kin do a heap of things."

But Dave had showed that at nine he was smarter than me. He had conquered the red stallion with gentleness. He had the greatest weapon agai.st Adam that he would ever need. His pride and his hate, and his Winchester —those were all that Adam had left now.

I lay down after a bit, meaning to rest while I listened for the sound of the sedan. I dozed. A shout awakened me. I jumped bolt upright, cracking my head on the bunk just above. When I reached the door it was light outside, with only a few stars fading off. Dawn pinkened the edges of the eastern range.

A half dozen cowpunchers were millin' around. The black sedan was parked a little ways from the bunkhouse. I seen the top of Lang's sun bleached head buck up along the top of the pole corral. Dave come running from the house, stuffing his pajama tops into a pair of work pants.

Lang yelled once. I suppose the crazy fool had gone braggin' around town of what he aimed to do, and the boys had called him short. Lang must have cut the sedan's motor at the top of the hill and glided down without making a sound. Some way they had managed to snub a halter onto the red stallion and pin him to the side of the corral long enough to clinch a saddle into place.

Running hard I seen the red devil go up in the air, legs scissored together, back arched like a leaping fish. And then out of the tail of my eye, I seen Dave vault over the corral bars, with the buttons poppin' off his pajama tops.

Lang didn't last two jumps. His legs seemed long as stilts as he went straight out of the saddle. He no more than hit the ground when the red killer turned, rearing back, nostrils flared, hoofs chopping the air. On the ground Lang screamed.

Dave shouted and the stallion trembled, then stopped dead still and looked at Dave while Lang dragged himself groggily to his feet.

Dave and Lang climbed out of the corral side by side. Lang might of been drunk during the night but he was sober now. Shook up maybe, but not hurt. Dave faced off to him, leavin' no doubt of what he aimed to do.

SOME ways I couldn't see Dave's purpose. Lang had been thrown. There wasn't no use to fightin' unless Dave loved the red horse so much he didn't want another man even to try to ride him. I glanced toward the porch. Adam was in his night clothes. He'd brought his wheel-chair close to the edge of the steps.

Dave was a head shorter than Lang, but he slammed his fist straight to Lang's jaw. Lang reeled back before his boot heels bit the ground, steadying him. A circle of cowpunchers swung around them, but nobody tried to interfere.

I saw the hard swing of Lang's plank square shoulder. Lang's big fist blasted into Dave's chest, tumbling him back againt the corral like a twisting pup. Lang swung again as Dave come up, bringing a froth of blood to his lips. Dave ripped his own fist alongside Lang's ear.

Lang growled and lunged. Dave sideslipped away from the corral. Lang had the size and reach and weight, but sometimes there's a fury inside a little man that won't tell him when he's whipped.

Lang's fist sledged into the side of Dave's head, half spinning him around. Dave's face was smeared with blood. Dave's fist raked up, skinning flesh from Lang's chin. Lang stumbled, and Dave leaped forward.

Dave's hand crossed over again, cracking hard. Lang flung his arm up to ward off blows that come as fast as the beating of an eagle's wings. The last punch lifted Lang's jaw with a sickening snap. Lang fell back, striking the

ground hard, breathing a floody film through the broken side of his nose.

Adam yelled then and I spun around. Adam had brung his wheel-chair too close to the porch stairs. The wheels bounced a little on the top step. The chair turned sideways, spilling Adam to the gravel walk below.

I reached Adam about the same time as Dave. It wasn't much of a drop. Adam wasn't hurt none, but there was fear in his eyes. He couldn't move by himself. The Winchester was up on the porch railing. A wind cut around the side of the porch, ruffling the vines. The morning that Dave could ride away on the red horse had come.

I looked at Dave. A couple of Dave's teeth were broken against his lip. Blood streaks tightened the skin of his face. His pajama shirt was ripped open, showing the long welt of an old whip scar—a scar that would always show white against Dave's hide. No man had a greater right to hate another than Dave had to hate Adam.

A couple of cowhands that Lang had brought from the dance drifted up to the house. Long-jawed men, the kind that would have straight memories and a slow, thoughtful way of telling how Dave Smoker tamed the red stallion that Adam Smoker couldn't ride.

Dave straightened the wheel-chair and picked Adam up tender as a baby. He stared down the slope toward the corral and turned slowly. He brought the Winchester from the porch railing and slipped it across Adam's lap.

"No one's going to ride the red stallion, Adam," Dave said.

I remembered something Dave had said a long time ago. "A thing that can be hit like that, on both sides even, you hadn't ought to hit at all." Most folks would say Dave was the biggest kind of fool there was. It wasn't the red stallion that Dave wanted to conquer with gentleness.

It was Adam, himself.

Dave turned and went into the house. I seen the look in Adam's eyes—the memories that squirmed alive—for just a fraction of a minute—before pride broke and died. Adam shucked the bullets out of the rifle and took it apart before he handed it to me.

"Take the gun to Dave, Pops," Adam said.

Adam sat still as death then, looking down the slope, not turning his head, but with all the time that an old man has for remembering a lifetime's mistakes. I reckon Dave was smarter than me, even when he was nine years old. Dave had won.

Test Yore Western Knowledge!

HERE are five questions about the West. If you can get the plumb proper replies to three or more of them, you're a real top-hand. The right answers are given on Page 113—but DON'T LOOK FIRST. Now see if you can dab a loop on the correct responses!

1. What famous Dodge City sheriff became a New York City sports writer?
2. Is a Tepee a wagwam?
3. In what towns are the West's two most famous Boot Hill graveyards?
4. How long was Texas an independent republic?
5. What is the usual length of a lariat?

Swinging around, Farrell fired at the shadowy figures

One-Man Wrecking Crew

By DONALD BAYNE HOBART

Rod Farrell busts a tough cowtown wide open!

LIGHTS gleamed from windows and open doorways as Rod Farrell rode slowly down the single street of the little cowtown. The sky was overcast, and the night as dark as the mood of the man in the saddle.

"Welcome to Dan Kenmore's town," Farrell said softly, bitterness lingering in his voice. "And if I'm a good boy, and act nice maybe I can stay here until I'm ready to leave this part of the country."

His gaze swung to the large two-story building on his left along the street. Every window of Kenmore's SILVER PALACE was lighted, upstairs and down. Saddle horses stood in a long line in front of the big saloon.

A tall man stepped to the edge of the plank walk and stood there waiting as Farrell rode toward the hitching rail seeking a place to tie his sorrel. The badge on Sheriff Tom Wilton's shirt shone faintly in the shadows like a far-off star.

"Didn't expect you in town tonight, Farrell," the sheriff said, his voice neither friendly nor unfriendly, just casual. "Usually the men from the Bar H outfit only come to town on Saturday nights."

"I'm not workin' for the Bar H any longer, Sheriff," Farrell said. "Hackett fired me."

He swung out of the saddle, found a place for his horse at the hitching rail and tied it there. Wilton was still waiting, and Farrell walked over to him,

lean, tall and with a hardness in his face that hadn't been there a month ago.

"So Brad Hackett fired you," the sheriff said slowly, as though puzzling it out in his own mind. "You mind tellin' me why?"

"You questioning me officially, or just curious?" Farrell asked.

The lawman puzzled him. He had heard it said that Dan Kenmore ruled the town and the surrounding country, but that he could not boss the Law so long as Tom Wilton was sheriff.

"Just curious," Wilton said. "You might even call it friendly interest, Rod."

Farrell hesitated before he spoke again. A month ago, when he had succeeded in getting a job on the Bar H, this part of Arizona had been new to him—he was Texas born and raised. He hadn't known about Dan Kenmore, and he had learned about him through hard experience.

All of the ranches around had been losing stock, rustlers work, of course, but none of the outfits appeared to be doing very much at trying to catch the cattle thieves. Rod Farrell was still young enough to speak his mind about things that puzzled him.

On his trips to town with the rest of the outfit on Saturday night, he had spent considerable time in the Silver Palace Bar, and he had observed at least ten men who were always in the place. Hard faced, sullen individuals with the stamp of gunslick about them all.

THEN just two nights ago Farrell had been listening to some of the cattlemen and waddies in the saloon talking about the rustling, and he had spoken before he thought.

"Seems to me that folks might get to wondering if these hardcases of Kenmore's were stealing the stock," he said.

From behind him someone had hit him over the head with a bottle and knocked him out cold. He had recovered consciousness to find himself lying in the alley at the side of the saloon, his head aching and the smell of whisky strong about him. Sheriff Wilton had been standing there looking down at him.

"Kenmore wants you arrested for being drunk and disorderly," the sheriff had said as he helped Farrell to his feet. "Claims you tried to wreck his place."

Wilton sniffed and then smiled as he saw in the light of early morning that Farrell's shirt was still moist from the whisky some one had deliberately spilled all over it.

"I've seen a lot of drunks in my time," the sheriff said. "And blame few of them ever wasted good liquor by spilling it all over them. What happened, Farrell?"

Farrell told about accusing Kenmore's men of being the rustlers, and how someone had knocked him out.

"You were foolish to go talkin' like that without any proof," Wilton said.

"But those men could be the rustlers," protested Farrell.

"Shore," said the sheriff. "And so could any other bunch of hombres around here. Guessin' ain't healthy."

The sheriff had walked away then, leaving Farrell alone. Shakily the cowboy had found his horse and ridden out of town, heading back to the ranch. Today the owner of the Bar H had called Farrell into the ranch office. Though it would not be pay day until the first of the month, Hackett handed Farrell some money.

"I'm lettin' you go, Farrell," the ranch owner said, gray haired and stern. "I can't have men in my outfit running wild and trying to wreck the Silver Palace, like you did two ights ago."

"Just how did that happen, anyway?" Farrell asked, remembering that he had been standing peacefully at the bar when he was knocked out.

"Maybe you don't remember," said Hackett. "But you were feeling sick so Kenmore had a couple of his men take you up to a small office he has on the second floor of the Palace. They left you there alone. Little later they heard a crash—you had broken a mirror with a chair, knocked over a desk and shore smashed up the place. Then you passed out again and they put you into the alley."

Farrell had realized that he had been nicely framed. As there didn't seem much point in trying to tell Hackett the truth, he had taken his pay, packed his saddle roll and left the ranch.

"I'd like to think yuh meant that about a friendly interest, Sheriff," Farrell said as he stood in front of the saloon talking to Wilton. "Always try to keep in with the Law. Reckon I got

that way from being a deputy in Texas some years back."

"So that's why yuh wear two guns like you're doin' now," said Sheriff Wilton. "I've got one deputy already, Matt Clark, but maybe I could use another one."

"I need a job, Sheriff," said Farrell, with a faint smile, and then his face grew hard. "But right now I got some business to tend to in a hurry."

"What business?" asked the Sheriff.

"You might say I was figgerin' on wrecking a saloon," said Farrell, heading for the swinging doors of the Silver Palace.

It was early in the evening and there were comparatively few men in the bar. One of Kenmore's gunslicks recognized Farrell when he entered and walked over to him.

"You got a lot of nerve comin' back here after what yuh did the other night," he said.

"Never mind that," said Farrell quietly. "Where is Kenmore? I want to see him on business."

The gunslick stepped back. He didn't like the look in Farrell's eyes, or the way his hands hung above the butts of the two guns in his holsters.

"Kenmore is in his office upstairs," the gunlick said.

FARRELL just nodded, strode past him as he went on up. He reached the second floor, and glanced down over the railing of the landing. He saw the gunslick who had spoken to him watching from below but no one else appeared to be paying any attention to him.

He went on along a hall until he discovered a half open door with the word "Office" on it. He entered.

"What do you want?"

Dan Kenmore rose from behind a desk as he spoke. He was big and dark haired, and it suited him to dress in range clothes with a gun in the holster at his hip. There was no one but the saloon owner in the office.

"Hackett fired me," said Farrell, his voice low. "And I've got something for you, Kenmore."

Kenmore looked surprised and relieved. Farrell noticed the broken wall mirror as he approached the other man.

"Something for me," said Kenmore. "What is it?"

"This!"

They were close now. Farrell's right fist shot out and landed with a thud against Kenmore's chin. The saloon owner reeled back but he didn't go down. Farrell hit him again.

"So I smashed up your office," he said.

Kenmore recovered and landed a right to Farrell's chest over the heart and a left to Farrell's face. The blows sent him reeling back against the wall. He ducked as Kenmore grabbed up a chair, and swung it at him.

From somewhere out on the street came the faint sound of gunshots, but neither man paid any attention. They had troubles of their own. The chair missed Farrell and shattered against the wall.

Farrell landed a punch that sent Kenmore staggering out through the open door of the office. Farrell leaped after him, and ran right into Kenmore's left fist. The blow knocked him against the wall at the side of the door. His head thumped heavily against the hard surface, and for an instant all the strength seemed to drain out of him. But he recovered almost instantly.

Farrell and Kenmore closed savagely. They edged back along the hall, pounding, smashing at each other. They reached the landing at the head of the stairs. Farrell swung with his right, the blow was a hard one and it landed on the saloon owner's chin. Kenmore fell sideways, crashed through the wooden railing of the landing, and dropped toward the floor of the bar below.

A roar of rage burst from Kenmore's gunmen as they saw their boss hit the floor with a thud and sprawled there motionless.

"Stay put, all of you," Farrell shouted.

His guns were in his hands, covering the men below as he moved slowly down the stairs. At any moment he expected a withering blast of lead, but the menace of the Colts in his fingers stopped them.

He reached the foot of the stairs. They were all watching him. In the stillness the sound of the sawdust crunching beneath the soles of his boots echoed loudly.

"You've killed Kenmore," said the gunman who had stopped Farrell when he entered the place.

On the floor Kenmore moaned and sat up, bruised and badly battered. He was only half conscious.

"Latigo," Kenmore called.

The gunman looked at the town boss, then hesitated, staring at Farrell's guns.

For the first time Farrell noticed that Brad Hackett and some of the waddies from the Bar H had entered the saloon and were standing at the bar, listening and waiting.

"Latigo," repeated Kenmore. "You and the men take care of that Cross In A Box stock tonight." He laughed strangely. "That kid claiming you and the boys are doing the rustling—shore is a big joke."

WITH a grim smile, Farrell saw Hackett and the men with him stiffen as they heard Kenmore's words. Evidently Kenmore was delirious from a blow on the head and babbling wildly.

"Looks like I guessed right," Farrell said.

He reached the door of the saloon and stepped out into the street. No one tried to stop him, but he was sure that Kenmore's gunslick would be coming after him at any moment.

He hurried down the alley between the saloon and the feed store. In back of the buildings was a board fence. From somewhere near the fence he heard a moan. He moved closer and saw two figures on the ground. One was Sheriff Tom Wilton and the other was his deputy, Matt Clark.

The sheriff sat up, propped himself against the fence and moaned with pain. The deputy was lying face downward and he was very still.

Farrell swung around as he heard a noise behind him. His guns roared as he caught a glimpse of Colts in the hands of two shadowy figures. One man howled and dropped his weapon, Farrell's bullet had caught him in the arm. The other gunslick turned and ran.

"Farrell?" called the sheriff.

"That's right, Sheriff," Farrell said.

Men appeared and Farrell lowered his guns as he recognized Hackett leading his waddies and a group of the honest citizens of the town.

"After Kenmore admitting his men were the rustlers," said Hackett, "we figgered it was time we were rounding up the rest of that crew. We've got them all hog-tied and waiting for the Law."

"Some of Kenmore's men drygulched me and Matt," said the sheriff weakly. "Reckon they figgered the evidence we were getting was dangerous. I aimed to arrest them for the rustling soon as I could get some more proof of their guilt."

"Rod Farrell produced plenty of proof by beating up Kenmore," said Hackett. The ranch owner grinned. "When Kenmore first said that Rod wrecked the Silver Palace he was lying—but he could shore say it again and be telling the truth!"

Three Great Western Action Novels—WAR ON WISHBONE RANGE by Charles Alden Seltzer, RIO GUNS by Gladwell Richardson, WILD-HORSE RANCH by Reginald C. Barker—in the gala October issue of our thrill-packed companion magazine—

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The Cowboy HAD A WORD for it!

by CHUCK STANLEY

THE young pilgrim on the C Bar S was enthusiastic about the course into which his research regarding the cowboy names for states, cities and natural beauties had led him. He was inclined to feel that the State of Utah was going to prove particularly fruitful because of the difference between the Mormons and the general run of settlers in the old West. That was one reason why he headed enthusiastically for his meeting at the harness shed with the old-timer.

The "younker" and his "mossy-horn" mentor always tried to arrange things so that their discussions would not interfere with the regular chores on the big ranch. So far they had heard no complaints from the "primero" in the big house or "Bull's Manse." The pilgrim's notebook was becoming a bit frayed around the edges and he already had several other notebooks stored away in his "gather" in one section of the bunkhouse.

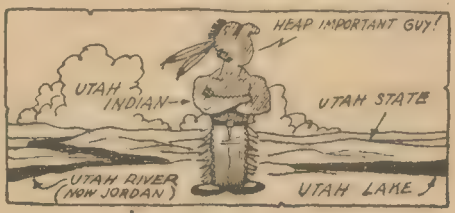
The State of Deseret

The "mavericker" looked up as the "Arbuckle" strolled into the saddle shed and said:

"Howdy, hombre. I reckon you're already for a sashay over into the State of Utah, or the State of Deseret as the Mormons liked to call it."

"Yes-sirree," agreed the "younker." "I've been doing plenty of reading about that part of the West, and it's plumb fascinating. I understand that Utah is another one of the places in the West named by our old friend John C. Fremont."

"That's sure right," agreed the oldster. "Fremont got the name from the Indians who occupied the area. We know them today as Utes, but as far back as the 1720s the Spanish explorers



referred to them a 'Yutta' Indians. Later spellings ran from Ute to Uta and finally to Utah. Fremont also named a river and a lake for the Indians of the Ute tribe."

The old-timer then explained that the Mormons changed the name of the Utah River to the Jordan River when they undertook to give religious names to many of the areas in their new state. They even wanted to use the name Deseret, which was the Promised Land spoken of in the Book of Mormon, the bible of the Mormons. Congress, when considering the name, wanted to skirt the religious issue and claimed they did not like the name of Deseret because it suggested a desert.

"Where was Utah first given as the name of the area?" the "younker" inquired.

"I reckon it was in the Compromise of 1850," the old-timer remarked. "Leastwise that's the way I've always heard it."

Our Tenderfoot Learns the Place-Names of Utah!

"Did the Mormons happen to name the capital Salt Lake City?" inquired the young man as he watched his companion working deftly with a punch and a heavy needle on a saddle skirt.

"No," the oldster replied, "and there's a story connected with that. In the past when they settled east of the Mississippi and in Missouri they had named towns from the Book of Mormon, calling them Adam-Ondi-Ahman and Nauvoo. They might have liked to call their new capital Jerusalem or Zion, but the mountain men had already named the Great Salt Lake because of its saline properties, and this impressed the Mormons. Therefore the city was originally called City of Great Salt Lake."

The two researchers then discussed how the territory of Utah was known popularly as Zion for quite a while the name Deseret came from the Book of Ether, one of the sections of the Book of Mormon where Jared and his brother, with their families, reached the Promised Land.

Since this land was to become a place of milk and honey, the bee was the important factor, the name Deseret was the name for the honey bee.

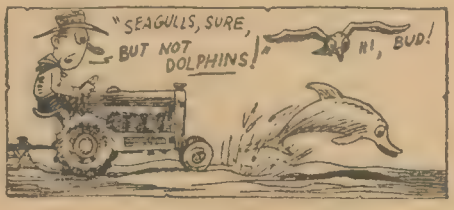
Bees Are Important

"That sounds something like Napoleon," the "Arbuckle" declared. "But I've found out that bees are plenty important in Utah."

"That's right," agreed the oldster. "I was up there with some other waddies one time, and we found the bee and the beehive all around. There's a beehive on the State seal, one on the seal of the University of Utah, and there's a place called the Beehive House in Salt Lake City. Newspapers use it on their mastheads, and if I remember right it's on the top of the police call boxes on the street corners."

"I've heard of that," replied the tenderfoot as he made his notes, "and there was something about seagulls, too. Was that in the Book of Mormon, too?"

"Oh, no," replied the odlster. "The seagulls have been venerated in Utah and have given their names to many of the every day activities of Utahns because of a much more practical contribution. In 1848 there was a great plague of crickets and locusts and the seagulls who nested on the islands in the Great Salt Lake came to the aid of the farmers and destroyed the insect visitors. Now it is possible to see seagulls, 800 miles from the nearest ocean, following a



farmer through his fields and eating the insects turned up by his plough."

First Names

The discussion then went back to places that were named from the Book of Mormon. These included Deseret which was named after the honey bees, Moroni which was named for the Angel Moroni. This was the angel which ordered Joseph Smith to dig for the Book of Mormon which was inscribed on the gold plates buried in the Hill Cumorah in Ontario County, New York. Two other cities were named after Alma and Nephi, the prophets of the Mormon church, and another was named after Lehi ,the King.

"What is the curious thing about place names after people?" the young waddy inquired.

"Well," laughed the oldster as he set aside a saddle skirt, started to re-thread his big needle, and tried to shift a cud of chewing tobacco at the same time, "folks in Utah went in for first names in a big way. They referred to their neighbors as Brother Paul and Sister Myra. Therefore when they wanted to name a town after Brigham Young they didn't call it Young City. It became known as Brigham City. Other towns were named Hyrum, Heber and Abraham for the same reason."

"Didn't they run into trouble if they wanted to name a place after an outsider?" inquired the lad as he made his notes.

The oldster shrugged his shoulders, then remarked:

"Not necessarily. Take the time they decided to name a town after President Millard Fillmore. They just called the place Millard after their local custom and let it go at that."

"But they dug into other customs, too, didn't they?" inquired the curious young greenhorn. "Like St. George.

Wasn't he the fellow who killed the dragon according to English legend?"

"Oh, no," replied the mavericker. "Most folks think the same thing you do, but you must remember that the Mormons called themselves the Latter Day Saints. Therefore men who rose to a high spot in their councils were known as saints. St. George, Utah is named after one of them, George A. Smith who was known locally as St. George. St. John was a similar situation. It was named after John Rowberry, a good Mormon church leader."

Other Name Contributors

The discussion then shifted away from the Mormons to names in Utah contributed by the Indians ,the Spanish and bynaturalists who came in and by local cowboys and trappers who twisted the original names into their own lingo.

The younker learned that the Mormons called all "foreigners" by the name "Gentiles." He learned that "conference weather" usually referred to rainy weather, because for some reason the heaviest rains usually occurred in the spring during the annual conferences of the Mormon church.

We already recall from our earlier research into Arizona, how Cardenas the Spaniard called the colorful valley of the Colorado by its name meaning "red" in Spanish. Further north in Utah the name is the Green River, because of the vegetation cultivated by the Mormons and in some places brought into being by their irrigation activities.

Simple names are given to some of the State's natural phenomena, such as the Capitol Reef in the south central part of the state, the Rainbow Bridge, a colorful natural bridge near the Arizona Border, the Arches in the eastern part, and the Natural Bridge a bit more to the southeast.

Utah Waterways

Utah Lake and Great Salt Lake provide a curious natural phenomenon—Both are in the same depression, and yet one is the largest fresh water lake in the state while the other is the largest body of salt water in the hemisphere.

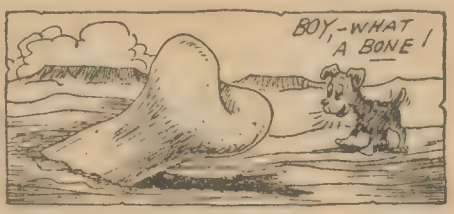
Rivers in the area bear names that are interesting. One is named after Fremont, who gave so many place names to areas in Utah. Another is named for the bears who roamed in the Uinta Mountains. The Spaniards contributed the name of San Juan, in memory of John the Baptist, to one of the local water courses.

Many early pioneers including railroad men, cavalry officers and Hudson's Bay traders, gave their names to such streams as the Weber, the Provo, and the Ogden.

Natural landmarks provided names for many other spots as well. One of these was Big Cottonwood Canyon, east of Salt Lake City named for a large alamos tree that marked it for early pioneers. Antelope Springs marked the spot where the lively pronghorns gathered between their mountain jaunts.

A Scientist's Paradise

Many of the spots in the Uintah Basin in Northeastern Utah take their names from the fossils that have been found there. This is indeed a scientist's paradise and the names including dinosaur, brontosaurus, diplodocus and allosaurus are common ones. This spot



has since been set aside as the Dinosaur National Monument by the Government and the Jensen quarry near the town of the same name is world-famous for its remains of mighty prehistoric reptiles.

Zion National Park in southwestern Utah near St. George is another spot where these early-world animals were found. Local cowmen and prospectors referred to the place as the "fossil Sahara."

Having come out of college before his journey into the West, our younker was interested in this information regarding the fossils, and the construction of the land masses in Utah. He broke in on the oldster and asked: "What was the Stansbury Terrace and the Stansbury level?"

"They were both the same. They indicated areas rising up to the Bonneville Salt Flats where various strata have been eroded away. The name comes from Captain Howard Stansbury who did a lot of exploring in this area and

collected natural history exhibits in the 1850s."

Colorful Lingo

The old-timer then pointed out that cowboys and trappers in Utah added the most colorful lingo to the lexicon of the cowboy and the Mormon settler by their descriptions of trees, birds and animals. Some of the local names were well worth recording and the younker's pencil went over his notebook with new vigor.

He recorded that the blue spruce which commonly grew near mountain streams and around lakes at the higher levels was known as "water spruce." He also discovered that the "Joshua tree" of the Mormon was also the Spanish dagger of Coronado or the yucca of the Mexican Border jumper. The Biblical name of the tree was assigned by the Mormons because they believed that the uplifted branches were like the arms of Joshua pleading to God. Tamarix plants which grew along streams and washes with salt earth about them were logically enough referred to as "salt cedars."

The mavericker leaned back against a bit of rawhide that was drying on a frame and shifted his chewing tobacco. Then he pointed out that frequently the ill-educated plainsman called the Engelmann spruce by the simpler name "white pine" and he was content to refer to the ponderosa pine as "yellow pine." Color and appearance were enough to mark a tree as far as he was concerned.

"There was also a difference of opinion about juniper trees," he concluded. "Folks out in Utah liked to call them cedar trees, maybe because the Mormon folks were thinking in Biblical terms and liked to recall the Cedars of Lebanon. In the mountains some of the fir trees also got some rather confusing names. There was the alpine fir which local folks called the 'white balsam'; and curiously enough the white fir was called 'black balsam.' Sure looks like someone was color-blind when he did that job of naming. Douglas fir carried out the color scheme by earning the local name of 'red pine.'"

The Quaking Asp

"I've always been interested in two kinds of growth that you see mentioned in many Western stories," declared the greenhorn. "One is the quaking asp, and the other is the buck brush. Were those real names in Utah?"

"Your quaking asp is the aspen tree, of course, and it's one of the commonest mountain trees. Buck brush is the local name for mountain mahogany. It was so-called because the deer who used to yard in the mahogany thickets used the brush to browse on."

There was a lapse of several moments while the old-timer gathered up some of his odds and ends to clean up the saddle shop. It was almost time for the "cookie" to slap the triangle for the evening meal, and the oldster did not want to come back to the saddle shed in the dark. While he worked, the youngster was checking his notes and he asked: "Who was 'Old Ephraim' in Utah?"

"That was the 'mountain man's' name for the big grizzly bear. When these bears used to feed on the animals in the traps or steal from the supplies of the mountain men, they set up groups of men who acted as 'killb'ars' and worked to exterminate Old Ephraim and his brothers. There was a special species of grizzly in Utah which was last identified in 1914. The folks out there also have a special kind of a skunk. It has spots on it instead of stripes."

The Pika

The younker also learned that Utah is one of the few places in North America where the pika is found. Cowboys described it as a "rock rabbit." It is only five inches long and has no tail. The "pygmy rabbit" is also a Utahn which has short ears and a short tail. The pika cuts and stores hay for the winter.

"While we're combing over the wild life," laughed the mavericker, "we might as well mention the cedar jay and the water ouzel or dipper bird. The cedar jay is the bird most authors like to call the 'Camp robber,' and it's a name that dates from the plainsman and mountain trapper. I don't know whether a cedar jay ever actually robbed a camp, but he sure made plenty of racket when he was around. And what do you know about Utah's water ouzel?"

The oldster cocked his head to one side, but the younker was ready for him. He laughed and said: "The water ouzel is the only bird which travels in water

that does not have webbed feet. If the current is too swift or the water is too deep it will swim with its wings."

"Right," agreed the range mentor, "that may amaze lots of folks. But if you'd like to give them a real humdinger that's as true as can be, you

might tell them that in Utah the Colorado River minnows frequently grow as long as two or three feet and weigh as much as thirty pounds. Yessirree. Utah is sure a great State!"

Morman Crickets

This might have sounded like a conclusion, but the younker had one other question. "What's a Mormon cricket?" he asked.

"It's sure a humdinger all right, too," the mavericker replied. "Folks out there call it 'the frightful bug' and 'the black Philistine.' It's the same cricket them seagulls go after. Some cowboys say it' a cross between a spider and a buffalo. That's not exactly accurate, but it is descriptive."

The triangle sounded and clumping boots indicated that the cowboys of the C Bar S were heading for the chuck. The mavericker and his young companion hurried to join them. They would get together for a discussion of Colorado and its place names as soon as possible in the future.

From the Annals of the West

THE land we today call New Mexico was settled by Spanish colonists out of Mexico and directly from the home country as early as 1600. These people received grants of land from the local governor in the name of the viceroy and of the king. One method of parceling out the land to those who had earned the thanks of the Spanish colonial government was to offer to a family as many varas of land, a vara being a shade larger than a square yard, as the number of beans in a sack that the strongest male member of the family could pick up.

ROGER Ballit was probably the first American druggist to establish himself in San Francisco. That was about 1850 when the new metropolis was loaded with gold seekers. Ballit set up shop in the rear of a saloon. He made a very nice profit sobering up patrons and selling a few odds and ends besides medicine. Some of the barkeeps thought his practice was excellent for their business. Let a fellow drink, then Ballit sobers him up, and the customer is ready to start buying all over again!

UP to the start of the Civil War period, physicians in the American southwest frequently refused to examine a woman patient unless her husband or some other responsible member of the family remained in attendance as a witness. One physician, Charles Markley of Texas, in 1819, was compelled to fight a duel with a man who claimed a physical examination of his wife had not been necessary.

EXACTLY how did Helldorado get its name? Well, the mines which gave the town life were called El Dorado, which means roughly, "place of gold." But Las Vegas, like many other tough mining camps, was bad indeed, a place where its unhampered citizens raised plenty of—er—heck. Whereupon a disillusioned citizen is supposed to have remarked, "El Dorado! Helldorado would be a darn sight better name!" And Helldorado it became!

A Navajo Tom Raine novelet by

Raine's six-shooter blasted and the giant went over into the dust

RANGER OUT

CHAPTER I

A Surprise For Raine

THERE was a pleased grin on "Navajo" Tom Raine's wide mouth as he tied the bedroll behind his saddle, tested the cinches to make certain that all was secure on his magnificent blue roan gelding, Wampum, and turned to glance around his camp grounds.

"Guess I didn't leave anything," he mused. "Man, but I'll be glad to get to Cowhide and sleep in a hotel bed."

JACKSON COLE

A land swindle and a spoiled girl's folly almost defeat the Arizona lawman, but a gang of desperadoes makes a mistake and his guns do the rest!

OF BOUNDS!

Raine was tall and long-limbed, with a deep, high-arched chest and big, muscular shoulders. His heavy black hair was cropped off just above his shoulders, and his lean, hawkish face burned so dark by desert wind and sun, that he was sometimes mistaken for an Indian.

Around the crown of his Stetson there was a string of Navajo-made silver ornaments, set with turquoise. His heavy

gold-and-silver spurs also were inlaid with turquoise, as were the grips of his two matched six-shooters. Yet despite his appearance and his liking for Navajo trappings, Raine was not an Indian.

"Bet you'll be glad to hit town and get some grain and hay, eh, Wampum?" Raine said as he swung into the saddle.

The powerful roan set off briskly across the flat heat-warped country that lay ahead. Miniature cyclones played tag across that barren flatland and shimmering heat waves made Raine's green eyes suddenly alert.

"Ho!" he said, and stopped Wampum.

A couple of miles to the south, there was another water hole, better than this small one where Raine had camped for ten long, wearisome days, and a sturdy old adobe shack, which Raine had been sorely tempted to use instead of camping out on the rocky ground.

But he had passed up the larger water hole and the inviting shack, for purposes of concealment. For Navajo Tom Raine was an Arizona Territorial Ranger, here on the toughest assignment Burt Mossman, captain and organizer of the Arizona Rangers, had ever given him!

"Am I seein' things, or not?" Raine grumbled, staring through the shifting heat waves.

HE SENT Wampum south at a fast running walk. That was smoke, all right, coming from that larger water hole, probably from the adobe chimney of the shack.

But on such a blistering hot day, the Ranger wondered who would want any such fire as it took to make all that smoke? He kept puzzling over that as Wampum went south.

Raine rode on along the deepening arroya, walking his horse cautiously as he finally drew near the mesquite trees around the water hole. He haltedWampum when they were a hundred yards from the cabin, traded his big hat for the Indian bandeau that was less unwieldly on stalking missions, then moved forward on foot, as he caught the deep, roaring voice of a man, ranting angrily.

Raine circled until he had the windowless back wall of the shack before him, then sprinted through the trees and flattened against the sun-cured adobes. There was some kind of a fracas going on inside that shack, he realized, for he could hear the scuffling of shifting feet, and a hoarse-voiced man rumbling angry oaths.

"I ought to break yore neck!" the angry man was growling. "You stuffed all that junk in the fireplace and set it on fire, knowin' there'd be a lot of smoke. What did you figger on, somebody comin' to yore rescue?"

There was the sound of a sharp blow, and suddenly Navajo Raine's green eyes were coldly alert, as he had caught the voice of a woman, begging the man not to strike her again. Raine went along the wall, heading for the front of the shack.

"Quit whimperin', and take yore whuppin'! the man growled. "Somebody might have seen that smoke. I'm aimin' to slap some sene into you before we quit this cabin."

The man was huge, yet when Raine appeared, he came around with the flowing speed of a cat. He stood leaning forward, astonishment written in every line of his flat-nosed, thick-lipped face as he stared at Raine, there in the doorway. The Ranger had deliberately rattled a spur to draw the man's attention. Now he knew that he was looking into the most brutal face he had ever beheld.

Crouched in the far corner of the cabin, was a slender young woman, with disheveled brown hair hiding part of her terrified face. Raine could see a welt across her right cheek and blood at the corner of her mouth.

"What's the trouble here?" Raine asked the giant.

"Git out!" the man roared. "What goes on around here ain't none of yore bizness. Git!"

The man's huge hands were matted with hair as black as the mop atop his flat-skulled head. Raine noted the hands because they were moving closer to the cedar grips of a pair of holstered guns on his massive thighs.

"Don't go!" the woman begged Raine in a choked whisper.

At this the giant uttered a roaring howl, dug for his guns and leaped at Raine.

But Raine had expected that charge. He jumped backwards through the door and bounded aside just before the guns roared.

The Ranger's own turquoise-butted guns came out. As the giant lurched through the doorway, one of Raine's

six-shooters blasted, and the heavy slugs hurled the shaggy giant over sideways and down against the hot, dun earth, blood wetting the soil on each side of him.

Raine replaced the spent cartridge in each gun, then glanced at the sky above the mesquite trees and cottonwoods along a water course, where a mushroom of dust stained the sky. He slid his reloaded guns hastily into holster and went into the cabin fast.

"Riders comin' this way, lady!" he said. "Any notion who they might be?"

"Thank heavens you came back, not Dirty Cabin!" the girl answered shakily.

"Dirty Cabin?" Raine echoed. "Was that the big fellow's name?"

SHE CAME out of the corner, walking a little unsteadily. She was taller, more attractive than Raine had realized. As she pushed back the wealth of hair, Raine saw that her face was bruised badly and that her lips were cut.

She was wearing riding breeches, cow-country boots, and a blue silk shirt. The right sleeve of the shirt had been ripped loose at the shoulder, and Raine saw ugly red scratches. The Ranger now realized that the girl had not heard his question concerning the riders approaching the shack.

"Listen to me, girl!" Raine said urgently. "There are riders coming this way, and they could mean trouble for us. Have you any idea who they might be?"

"Take me away!" Her voice rang out, shrill with alarm.

"Easy, now!" Raine said sharply. "Keep your head, girl. Maybe those riders saw smoke and are just comin' to see who built such a big fire on a day as hot as this."

He had hoped to soothe the girl but she clutched at his arm, more panic-stricken than ever.

"I was abducted last night by four men!" she said. "Those men were hired by Kelly Fitch, the banker at Cowhide. I was brought here, locked in this shack, and that hairy beast, Dirty Cabin, was left to see that I did not escape. If riders are coming, it will be those other three men who helped bring me here. I have no idea who two of the devils are. But the leader is a man called Navajo Tom Raine, who claims to be an Arizona Ranger, but is actually a fiendish killer, hired by the banker, Kelly Fitch!"

CHAPTER II

Masked Riders!

AMAZED at what she had said, Navajo Tom Raine stared at the girl. He stood there, regarding her, his face giving no hint of the anger that boiled inside him.

"Those riders, miss, are comin' from the southwest," he said. "My horse is nearby, in an arroyo. Let's both of us slip out of that window, there. We can get away unseen."

The girl nodded, spun around and slid herself through the small window. Raine followed, then took time to peer around the corner of the little adobe shack. The dust cloud was still there, and moving dots that were the riders making that dust, but could not count them.

"Those riders are still quite a piece away, miss," he said. "I think I'll have time to find and saddle your horse. Any idea where the animal might be?"

"There are no horses," the girl said quickly. "That murderer, Navajo Tom Raine, not only took my horse away with him last night, but took Dirty Cabin's too. That's how I found out about Raine."

"What do you mean?" Raine asked.

He touched the girl's arm, started her walking away through the mesquites.

"Dirty Cabin was furious over being set afoot," the girl explained. He was so angry he told me all about how old Kelly Fitch hired Raine to come here and help wreck certain plans my father has for turning a vast area of this desert into a green and productive paradise."

"Say, you're Walter Gore's daughter!" Raine said so sharply the girl stared at him.

"Does that mean anything special, to you?" she asked.

"Look," Raine answered gravely. "I killed a man I caught thumpin' you around, and hadn't the slightest idea who the man was, who you were, or why

the blamed fool tied into me with smokin' guns. Now here's my horse. After we're aboard, I think you ought to straighten me out and let me see what kind of a game I've stuck my nose into."

Raine made his voice sound peevish, hoping to cover up the slip he had made in showing too much interest in the girl's identity. He knew all about her father, Walter Gore, who was attempting to turn a big chunk of this sun-blistered Border country into a paradise. Gore had built a dam across a narrow canyon, and that dam had backed enough water up in Kicking Horse Basin to irrigate thousands of acres.

"What a beautiful horse!" the girl said when they came upon Wampum. "Is he gentle, Mr.—"

She looked up at Raine expectantly, wanting him to give his name. He returned her gaze soberly. Revealing his identity now might spoil his chances of getting information he sorely needed.

"I'll use the name of Jones, if you don't mind," he said sourly. "'Careless' is my handle, since that seems to fit me so blamed well."

Raine was thinking of the ten hard days he had just spent trying to find out why Walter Gore had adopted a plan that would completely ruin the town of Cowhide, and cause considerable bloodshed. Raine had figured that no one had known about his investigations.

But obviously he had been spotted. And whoever had spotted him had gone to considerable pains to see that he was suspected of carrying off this tall girl. Raine was throughly vexed with himself for letting somebody discover him. Hence his suggestion that the girl call him "Careless."

She said nothing until she was in Wampum's saddle, and he was seated behind her. As Wampum moved off the girl turned her head and spoke.

"I don't imagine that your name is Jones, and I doubt very seriously if you're ever careless about anything," she said. "Yes, you're right. I'm Sue Gore. But I'm still puzzled over how you guessed my identity, Careless."

THE RANGER gave her a broad smile. "Easy answered," Raine pointed out. "You mentioned that your father has plans for turning this desert into a paradise, Miss Sue. I'm a drifter, and a drifter hears lots of things. I know about the dam Walter Gore built over yonder in the mountains, and I'd heard that Mr. Gore had a beautiful daughter. I've discovered that to be fact, not rumor. So when a beautiful girl mentioned that her father has plans for makin' a paradise out of desert land, I added the score up pretty fast."

Sue Gore laughed. "If you're married, you're probably a philanderer, and if you're single, you won't stay so very long, unless you quit making flattering speeches. But what else have you heard, Careless Jones?"

"Well I know that your father has stirred up considerable trouble here, Miss Sue," he drawled. "It seems that he had agreed to run a main canal from Kicking Horse Lake to the upper end of Llano Pintado, a vast stretch of fertile land east of here. But all of a sudden, Walter Gore changed his mind about bringing water across to Llano Pintado, after getting mixed up with a two-bit character by the name of Neal Gilbert, who owns Mustang Sink—"

"Stop right there, Careless Jones!" Sue Gore's voice was like ice. She whirled around to look at Raine, her eyes bright with anger. "Just what do you mean?"

The Ranger sighed. "I should have sense enough to know that big, tow-headed spur-jinglin' Neal Gilbert would make a play for a girl as pretty as you are, Sue." Raine grinned wryly. "But that's carelessness again. I should have kept my big mouth shut."

"Mr. Gilbert and I are engaged!" the girl aid coldly. "Where my father runs his canal is entirely his own business! But you and Banker Kelly Fitch and the rest of those roughnecks at Cowhide are trying to force Dad to ditch the water to the Llano Pintado acres. They've shot at our work crews, blasted the canal dykes, burned camp buildings, and behaved like wild animals. Dad and Neal laid out a town they called Lakeside, and sensible people are quitting Cowhide in droves, coming over to the new town, where irrigation—"

"Hold on, girl!" Raine interrupted sharply. "Where did you get the idea that Kelly Fitch is anything but a kindly, honest intelligent man?"

"I see!" Sue Gore said scathingly. "You're a Kelly Fitch man, Careless

Jones! Your boss must have forgotten to tell you that he was having Navajo Tom Raine and those outlaws capture me!"

"You didn't answer my question," Raine snapped. "I want to know who told you that Kelly Fitch would stoop to underhanded deals."

Before the girl could reply there came the thud of a bullet striking the cut-bank ahead of them, then the scream of the flattened slug wailing off into space. Raine swung around, looking back. Three men, heavily masked and wearing tightly hooked slickers despite the heat, were roaring up the brink of the arroyo behind them, trying to get within six-shooter range.

"Ride, girl!" Raine yelled, and slammed the spurs to Wampum's flanks.

"It's Navajo Raine and those other men who helped abduct me!" Sue Gore cried. "Those are the same white masks they had on last night!"

Mentally calling himelf seven kinds of fool for having poked along so slowly up the arroyo, Navajo Raine slid his left arm around Sue Gore, and with his own body tried to shield her from the slugs those three masked men were sending after them. Raine's right hand flipped a six-shooter out of leather, and the gun bucked and jumped until the spike hammer clicked on an already spent cartridge. As that swarm of slugs squalled at them the three masked men began sawing on reins, jumping their mounts into the arroyo for protection.

RAINE swung Wampum up the side of the arroyo, pulled his arm from about her, and hastily reloaded and holstered the Colt he had emptied. Then he leaned forward, slid a Winchester from the boot under the right stirrup fender. As Wampum went scrambling up a sloping embankment, Raine's green eyes hastily lined the rifle sights on the three masked riders in the open gully behind him. The rifle blazed, and the masked gunman who was in the lead flung up his arms, spilled backwards over the pony's tail when the horse kept running.

"I hope that was Navajo Tom Raine"' said Sue Gore, peering back.

Raine didn't answer the girl's remark.

Wampum had dashed out onto the flat, carrying them away from the arroyo, out of sight of the masked men and Raine kept the rifle ready for instant use. But as the speedy roan bore out across the flat he realized that those other two masked men were not going to show themselves, and eased Wampum down to a trot. Raine leaned down past her and slid the rifle back into the scabbard.

"Keep the gun out!" she advised. "They'll follow us, and you'll need it."

"Those two hombres back there haven't any rifles, so they'll have better sense than to crowd a man who does have one," Raine said.

"You're a strange person, Careless Jones!" the girl said nervously.

Raine knew the girl was giving him an opening to talk, but he had no intention of doing it. He glanced at the sun, saw that it was well down towards the western skyline, then studied the line of the arroyo but saw no sign of the masked men. An exclamation from Sue Gore made him pull Wampum to a stop.

"That road yonder!" she said sharply. "That's the Cowhide Apache Pass road. What shall we do?"

"Do?" Raine echoed. "Why, head for Cowhide, naturally."

"Don't be foolish!" the girl cried. "Kelly Fitch and his thugs would capture me again."

"You're acquainted with Cowhide, I suppose?" Raine asked cautiously.

"No, I'm not," Sue replied. "I've only been in Cowhide a few times, and Dad introduced me to Kelly Fitch, once. But the old rascal would know me if he saw me, and I'm not going into that town!"

"Simmer down, now!" Raine said soothingly. "I've a couple of good friends at the edge of town, and we can go there without bein' seen."

"I'm not interested in meeting your friends," the girl snapped. "I'm going home, so let's not argue about it."

"Don't go stubborn on me, Sue," Raine said quietly. "With your father away, those fellers would get hold of you again if you showed up at Lakeside."

"How did you know my father is away?" Sue asked, sharply.

"I know Walter Gore went to Tucson five days ago because I sent him there, Sue," Raine said evenly. "He told you and Neal Gilbert and Gilbert's two side-kicks, Sam Wilson and Grady Burch, that he would be

lack in Cowhide tomorrow evening. But your father will arrive in Cowhide on the six o'clock stage tonight, Sue. He'll be at the home of this friend of mine, where you and I are going."

Suddenly alarm came into the girl's eyes. Now she was leaning away from Raine, again in near panic.

"My father wouldn't have lied to Neal or to me, either," she said nervously.

"Your father isn't an easy man to fool, Sue," Raine said. "Until you told me that you're engaged to Neal Gilbert, I certainly couldn't understand how Gilbert has been pulling the wool over your father's eyes. Now I am beginning to understand what Walter Gore has been up against."

"I ought to slap your impudent face!" the girl said angrily.

"And I ought to spank you for all the grief you've caused your father by bein' empty-headed enough to fall for that Neal Gilbert crook!" Raine growled. "We're going to Cowhide!"

SUE GORE was furious, but still scared. As the roan moved onward, Raine grinned at the stiff little shoulders before him.

The sun went down, night came and an hour later a big moon showed. Soon they were within sight of Cowhide, and Raine broke the long silence.

"See that group of lights on the knoll to your right, Sue?" he said. "That's Cowhide."

After a while Wampum swung toward a huge, sprawling house that gleamed whitely in the moonlight, approached a grove of soughing tamarisk trees.

"Why are you stopping out here?" Sue Gore snapped sharply. Filled with fear, she turned and tried to claw at his eyes.

"Stop it, Sue!" Raine whispered tensely.

Sue did not stop. She slapped his hat off, got both hands full of his long hair, and the Ranger felt as if his scalp was being torn clean from his skull. Wampum lunged suddenly, and Raine uttered an exclamation of dismay as he felt himself and the girl start falling.

They landed on a thick pad of the short, brown needles that had sifted down from the tamarisks. The girl sat up. Raine had started getting on his feet when he saw dark figures rushing at him through the black shadows.

"Sue, look out!" he called. "Get down, so I can use—"

Raine did not finish. He tugged a gun from leather as he spoke, wanting Sue out of the way before he used the weapon. There were two of the men rushing at him, he saw. He had not seen the third, who came in on him from behind, traveling fast.

Raine heard the thud of feet beside him. As he tried to whirl, a gun came slamming down across his skull, and he was faintly aware that Sue Gore was screaming just as a black curtain of unconsciousness enveloped him. The tall Ranger lay limp and unmoving, while a burly figure bent over him, taking the turquoise-butted guns.

CHAPTER III

Ranger On The Prod!

WHEN Navajo Tom Raine awakened, he found that he was lying face down across Wampum's saddle, and that the horse was being led by a burly, slicker-clad man. The Ranger started to rear up, sensing that no ropes held him. But he checked the impulse, seeing another slicker-clad figure pacing alongside, only a few feet away, with Sue Goring slung over his shoulder.

The girl was still unconscious, her bright hair and slim arms trailing down the back of the man's slicker. Raine realized that he and the girl were being carried back into the deep arroyo from which they had ridden only a few minutes earlier. Behind him, he heard shod hoofs clattering, and knew that the third masked man was bringing up the rear.

Raine remembered his rifle still in the scabbard next to his saddle, but groaned inwardly, for it was on the opposite side. After a time the man leading Wampum had pulled to a halt in deep shadows, and the other man lowered Sue Gore to the ground.

"She's still out?" the burly fellow asked.

"Like a snuffed candle!" the man who had carried the girl replied.

They had spoken in low tones. Navajo Raine grinned coldly into the shadows, for he could have called those two by their names, just as he could have named the slim, wiry man who came lurching into the grove of mesquites, leading three saddled horses.

The masks they were wearing were nothing more than soap-bleached flour sacks.

"We better git to movin'," the slim fellow panted. "That gal's screechin' stirred up two or three fellers at Old Man Fitch's place."

"Shut up, and get on your horse!" the burly leader muttered. "You mount, too, Grady, and I'll hand Sue up to you."

The fat man Raine already knew to be Grady Burch growled, "Let's get through with this quick, Neal!"

"Yep, make it fast," the slim man said. "I've felt nervous ever since this feller beefed Dirty Cabin and got away with the girl."

Raine knew the slim man, too. He was Sam Wilson.

The burly leader was Neal Gilbert, the handsome, swashbuckling tow-head to whom Sue Gore claimed to be engaged. With the help of Dirty Cabin, skinny Sam Wilson and corpulent Grady Burch, Neal Gilbert had been operating here along the Sonora-Arizona border for four or five years, pulling off shady deals. But so far Neal Gilbert and his gang had managed to keep out of the law's reach.

"When I ran up behind Raine and bounced my gun off his head, Sue looked up at me and said 'Navajo Raine, you've killed Careless Jones,'" Neal Gilbert droned. "Raine evidently didn't let her know who he was, so we can still work our scheme to start a run on Fitch's bank tomorrow, and fold that town of Cowhide up."

"But when Sue finds out who Raine is, boss, that'll ruin our plan of havin' Kelly Fitch accused of hirin' Raine to kidnap the girl, won't it?"

"We won't give Raine to shoot off his mouth and ruin our plans," Neal Gilbert said coldly. "Not if Navajo Tom Raine just vanishes and Sue never sees this 'Careless Jones' party again."

"That's the ticket, boss!" Sam Wilson cackled, swinging aboard his horse.

Grady Burch mounted, too, and big Neal Gilbert turned to Sue Gore. Raine's eyes gleamed hopefully when he saw that Gilbert was holding a pair of six-shooters in his left hand. Raine recognized the pistols as his own turquoise-butted weapons.

"Up we go, sweetheart!" Gilbert chuckled, as he laid down the guns and started lifting the girl.

Sam Wilson and Grady Burch both yelled simultaneously. Neal Gilbert let go of the girl and half turned, when he saw the long, black figure leaping at him through the shadows. Burch pawed frantically at his slicker, trying to get to his guns. A fist smashed against the side of his masked head, bowling him over.

"Boss, hit leather!" Sam Wilson shrilled. "Men are comin' down the slope from Fitch's place."

NEAL Gilbert's answer was drowned in the roar of guns as Sam Wilson and Grady Burch fired at Navajo Raine, who had dived behind a big mesquite with his turquoise-butted guns once more in his hands. But just as Raine rocked the hammers back and started the deadly weapons weaving to target, Sam Wilson, Grady Burch and Neal Gilbert whirled their horses and went out of sight into the thicket.

"Hold on, down there!" an authoritive voice bawled from the slope above. "What's the trouble?"

"Sheriff Ed Saddler!" Raine heard Neal Gilbert's voice call faintly above drumming hoofbeats.

Raine turned as Sue Gore sat up suddenly, her slim silhouette showing against the brighter background.

Once more a voice came through the night.

"Some of you hombres sing out down there, or we'll start these Winchesters talkin'!" Ed Saddler, Cowhide's young sheriff, yelled angrily.

"Hold your fire, Ed!" the ranger called. "It's me, Tom Raine. Sue Gore is here with me."

Raine turned quickly at Sue Gore's startled gasp. The girl sprang to her feet, and screamed at the top of her lungs just as three men came running off the hill, Winchesters ready for action.

A half hour had passed and Sue Gore was continuing to behave badly, letting her temper mount until she was in a tantrum. Navajo Raine and the others were in the big, comfortably furnished

living room at old Kelly Fitch's home. Sue was pacing up and down the floor, her eyes flashing gray fire, her bright hair shimmering in the lamplight.

Raine glanced at stocky, blunt-jawed Walter Gore, who sat red-faced and fidgeting, then at Kelly Fitch, who sat beside his wife on a couch. Kelly Fitch was gaunt, white-haired, and had the lean, lanky frame of a man who was active despite his years. The banker was frowning.

Stella Fitch was biting her lip, as she watched Sue Gore out of shocked blue eyes.

Brown haired young Sheriff Ed Saddler sat on the edge of a chair, nervously twisting the brim of his sweat-marked gray Stetson, as he observed the angry girl. Suddenly she whirled and stopped before him.

"Sit there, if you must!" Sue Gore said scathingly. "You're like my father and Mr. Fitch, I suppose. You don't believe that this savage carried me off to that desert shack, do you?"

She pointed dramatically at Navajo Raine.

"Miss Gore, if only you'll calm down a little, we can get this straightened out," the sheriff said with forced politeness.

"Bah!" the girl snapped angrily. "You're obviously a fool, Sheriff!"

"If your father'd whale the daylights out of you, maybe we'd have a chance to attend to some mighty important business," Navajo Raine told coldly. "Sit down, before I spank you good. I mean it, Sue!"

The girl whirled. She took a step towards the Ranger, but stopped when she saw the cold gleam in his green eyes.

"Are you threatening me?" she asked shrilly.

"If you don't want a spankin', quit actin' like a spoiled brat!"

"Quit it, Tom!" Walter Gore cried. "This child has had a terrifying time, so naturally she's badly upset. Let's not have no more threats against her, if you please!"

"Sue is eighteen or nineteen, I'd say, therefore she's no child, even if she does act like one," Raine retorted. "And I may have to lock her up tonight."

The unmistakable determination in the Ranger's voice and manner shocked his listeners to complete silence. Sue turned pale, drew in a deep breath and, for the first time since she had started her tantrum, became calm.

"You wouldn't dare!" she told him coldly.

THE Ranger gave her a store which was just as cold.

"Unless you snap out of this foolishness and listen to reason, I'll have no choice," Raine told her bluntly. "During the tirade you launched at Ed Saddler becaue he won't arrest me, you mentioned what Neal Gilbert will do to me when you've told him your story. If I allowed you to leave here, in your present mood, you'd go straight to Neal Gilbert, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I shall go straight to Neal when I leave here!" Sue flared. "And I'm leaving any time I wish, Navajo Tom Raine."

"I don't see that you can prevent her from going, Tom," Walter Gore said uneasily. "Certainly you mustn't arrest my little girl. If only we had proof that would convince her—"

He broke off, reddening under Raine's cold, bright stare.

"It's hgh tiime you quit pampering your daughter, Walt!" Raine said. "I'll give her the facts, straight and hard. If she won't listen, I'll lock her up, put her in protective custody."

"Protective custody?" Sue asked, and Raine was glad to note that the young lady's temper was cooling rapidly.

"Sue, if you ran to Neal Gilbert and told him your story, your father would have to hand over a fortune to get you back," Raine said.

"Why do you think that, Tom?" Banker Kelly Fitch asked.

"Sue, why don't you let Mrs. Fitch show you to a room?" Walter Gore stammered.

He motioned frantically for Raine to keep quiet.

"Tom Raine, what is going on here?" Sue asked sharply. "Why do you want me out of this room?"

"You're all mixed up, Sue," Raine said sternly. "It was your father who tried to shunt you out of here, not I. He doesn't want you to hear certain facts I can give. I disagree with him. I'd like you to hear the truth. Might do you good."

"Tom, do you know them three masked men who fired at you and the girl out on the desert today, then sneaked

up here and grabbed both of you tonight?" Sheriff Ed Saddler asked.

"Of course he knows them!" Sue Gore said sharply. "They were his own men. He's responsible. Mr. Fitch hired him to do it. Raine murdered that poor, stupid mixed-blood known as Dirty Cabin simply to convince me I was being rescued. And you, Ed Saddler, know Raine did these things. You are in Mr. Fitch's hire, too."

"There, Stella!" Old Kelly Fitch chuckled drily. "See what sort of fiend you've been married to all these thirty-odd years?"

"Whoever put such ideas in that child's mind should be horse-whipped!" Stella Fitch said sharply.

"Sue, let's be honest," Raine said quietly. "Down in your heart, do you honestly believe I'm to blame for your abduction, then murdered Dirty Cabin in order to make it appear that I was rescuing you?"

"Of course you did!" the girl said.

"Use your reason, girl!" the Ranger cried. "Why should I do a thing like that?"

"Because you're helping Kelly Fitch pull some kind of trick on my father!" Sue replied. "Or have you forgotten that you admitted to me, today, that you had sent my father to Tucson on some mysterious errand?"

"There's no mystery about the errand your father was on," Raine declared. "He simply took soil samples from Mustang Sink to have them analyzed."

"But—but Father!" Sue cried. "You had that soil tested when Neal bought Mustang Sink, and asked you to run your canal down there. You said the tests showed the soil to be a great deal better than you had judged it to be."

"Yes, yes, dear!" Walter Gore said uneasily. "Why don't you run along, now? Later on—"

He floundered, broke off when he saw Raine's cold stare boring him sternly.

"I can understand you wantin' to spare the girl's feelings, Walt," Raine said quietly. "You let her and Neal Gilbert whip-saw you into this whole mess, knowin' that there was somethin' fishy all the time, but playin' along to keep from hurtin' Sue. But there's somethin' a lot bigger than a spoiled daughter's feelings at stake, now. She stays in this room and gets the facts. If she refuses to listen to reason after that, I'll see that she stays corralled until this whole thing is cleared up. Now start the ball rollin' yourself, Walt, by tellin' her what a test of Mustang Sink soil showed!"

CHAPTER IV

A Close Call

SUE GORE glanced at her father uneasily, wondering what she would hear.

"Father, what is Tom Raine talking about anyhow?" she asked.

"The soil in Mustang Sink, my dear, is absolutely no good," Walter Gore said wearily. "There's a deposit of salt, or alkali as it is generally called, beneath that soil that would come to the surface under irrigation, rendering the land worthless. I suspected as much from the first, as you know, because of the scant growth in the sink."

"That's ridiculous!" Sue persisted stubbornly. "You know very well that soil tested first-rate."

"Do you think that I would lie to you, Sue?" Walter Gore asked in a tired voice.

"Of course not, father!" she said quickly. "But I think you've been fooled, somehow, by this—this white savage who learned all the deviltry and cunning of the Navajo Indians he grew up with after his father, Marshal Powder Raine, was ambushed and murdered during the Tonto Basin war!"

She turned angry eyes on Navajo Tom Raine as she finished speaking, and the tall Ranger met the stormy look levelly.

"You and your father were tricked on those first soil tests, Sue," Raine said evenly. "Neal Gilbert had gumption enough to know your father would want tests run on that ground in Mustang Sink before he would send canal water down there. Gilbert switched samples of soil taken from Llano Pintado, over here, for the Mustang Sink soil your father had had taken as samples. Those good reports that came

back were tests made on Llano Pintado soil, not Mustang Sink earth."

"You—you coward" Sue blazed. "You're like some other people around here, Tom Raine. You're envious of Neal Gilbert because he is handsome, gay, charming and progressive. He has made something of himself by hard work and careful planning, and you are so envious of his success that you've come to hate him. Do you think I will believe that Neal stooped to any such sneaking trick as that?"

"Gilbert switched those soil samples, Sue," Raine repeated. "Or maybe he had one of his three side-kicks, Sam Wilson, Grady Burch, or that big mongrel, Dirty Cabin, do the actual switching. Then Gilbert and those three desperadoes of his fired on the crews your father hired to build that canal. Gilbert circulated the story that Kelly Fitch, there, was behind those bushwackings, which cost the lives of three workmen, and made hospital patients out of at least a half dozen more."

"Oh, no!" Sue said hoarsely. "Even though you grew up with savages, Tom Raine, you surely can't think I'm stupid enough to believe such rotten lies as you're telling!"

"I'm not lying to you, girl," Raine said patiently. "Neal Gilbert and his bunch murdered those three workmen, and crippled the others with bullets. Gilbert laid out his Lakeside town, up yonder in the desert, and has been sellin' lots there, as well as farming land down in Mustang Sink. And all the time Gilbert has kept this town of Cowhide in a turmoil, circulatin' his sneakin' lies about Kelly Fitch. People are leavin' here in droves, investin' their money in Mustank Sink land, which is worthless, and buyin' lots in Lakeside, which will never be anything more than the staked-out plot of desert it is right now."

"Just wait until I tell Neal what you've said, Tom Raine!"

Sue Gore's voice trembled with emotion.

"Neal Gilbert has everyone around here so worked up that they're at least scared," Raine went on eyeing her with dislike. "He started the whisper that Kelly Fitch aimed to close the doors of his bank, refuse to pay the depositors. So tomorrow, Sue, there'll be a run on Mr. Fitch's bank."

"And you think that by pretending to have rescued me, you could bring me here, get me to be friendly with Mr. Fitch and his wife, and use that, in some way, to stop that bank run!" Sue charged.

"Those men who ran off with you meant to allow you to escape from them some time tomorrow," Raine said evenly. "They meant to time it so you would spread your misguided remarks right at the height of the bank run. With the whole town already roaring with excitement, Kelly Fitch and me would be lynched on sight after you got through gabbin'. Cowhide would have been a ghost town inside of two months after that—and Neal Gilbert would have bought up Llano Pintado, cut a new canal east across the flats when the alkali came to the surface down in Mustang Sink, and made another fortune re-establishin' this town and sellin' Llano Pintado acreage to farmers at fifty times the amount he would have had to pay for it!"

THE girl interrupted him. "There!" Sue cried. "You're jealous about how much money Neal may make. But Neal has no such plans in mind as you have described, Tom Raine!"

"Neal Gilbert and those three side-kicks of his, Sam Wilson, Grady Burch and that big Dirty Cabin fellow, abducted you last night, Sue!" Raine said harshly. "After I had to shoot Dirty Cabin today, those three men tried their best to smoke us down. They circled up here, and I knew they had when I heard them moving in the tamarisk grove, out back of this house, where we first stopped. I tried to silence you, Sue, so's I could locate those three devils. But you got scared and fought me, and they captured us. Those three men, Sue, were Neal Gilbert, Sam Wilson and Grady Burch!"

"Tom, are you sure?" Walter Gore asked hoarsely.

"You can bet he's sure, or he wouldn't say so!" Kelly Fitch said proudly. "I told you, Walt, when Burt Mossman sent Tom Raine to help us, that Neal Gilbert and his gang were due to hub a lot of trouble."

"Thank heavens, this whole terrible thing can end, now!" Stella Fitch said, and her voice was shaking.

"Hot-diggity!" Sheriff Ed Saddler

yelped. "Tom, let's go get warrants sworn out!"

Wooden-faced, Raine did not show any of the enthusiasm the others felt. He was watching Sue Gore's face grow tense and white, watching fear and fury gather in her lovely eyes.

"So you had planned on using my abduction as a means of saving this town of Mr. Kelly Fitch's, hadn't you?" she flung at him.

"In other words, Sue, you don't believe a word I've said, do you?" Raine asked gravely.

"Believe you?" the girl cried. "Tom Raine, I've listened to you spout one of the most evil, most cowardly lies a human brain ever conceived!"

"And you'd go straight to Neal Gilbert with everything you've heard me say, if you got the chance, wouldn't you?" the Ranger persisted.

"Of course I'll warn Neal that you intend to give him trouble!" the girl cried.

"All right, Ed!" Raine said gravely. "Take charge of the young lady."

"M-me?" the sheriff gulped. "Gosh, Tom, I never arrested a woman in my life!"

"I'm not suggesting that you arrest Sue," Raine replied. "But she has to be kept in protective custody until we can hamstring that Gilbert crook. If she ran to him, and spouted what I've said here, Gilbert would savvy that the jig is up for him. He'd have the girl across the line into Sonora before you could say scat!"

"Why do you think Gilbert would take my daughter to Mexico, Tom?" Walter Gore asked nervously.

"If Gilbert finds out Ed Saddler and me have enough evidence against him to send him to prison, you can bet he'll duck into Mexico if he gets the chance," Raine said gravely. "Gilbert has sunk most of the money he's made off crooked mine promotions and shady cattle deals in that Mustang Sink and the Lakeside townsite. It would take that coyote brain of his about two seconds to figure that the best thing for him and his two pals to do would be head for South America. You can just bet that Neal Gilbert would see that all he had to do to make a fat South America stake would be waltz Sue into the Sonora badlands and hold her there until you paid a king's ransom for her release. You can see for yourself that this girl of yours would run to Neal Gilbert, if she got the chance. So all I can do is ask Ed Saddler to—"

Raine broke off abruptly, head canted in a listening attitude. The room became hushed as the others listened, too.

"What is that noise?" Kelly Fitch asked.

"Unless I'm badly mistaken, Kelly, there's a big mob of men pilin' into your front yard," Raine said, and his voice was low and hard.

"Mob?" Sheriff Saddler and Walter Gore cried in the same startled moment.

RAINE strode down the long room, caught a heavy drape that covered a window, and eased the thick cloth back a few inches. He peered out, only to dodge back when a gun bellowed outside, glass smashed, and the drape billowed out violently, whipping across his face. Through the roar of the six-shooter that had flung the bullet, Raine heard a thick-voiced man cursing outside, ordering that the shooting be stopped.

"Lights out!" Raine yelled at his wide-eyed companions. "Kelly, you and your wife start blowing these lamps out. Ed, grab onto Sue and see that—Say, where is that girl?"

"Wh-what?" the sheriff gasped. "Why, she was right here only a second—"

"Her father is gone, too!" Stella Fitch cried. "Tom, when you and the rest of us turned our attention to the front part of the room, Walter must have taken the girl and—"

She broke off, staring, as did Raine and the other two men, at Walter Gore. He came through the huge archway and into the room, ghost white and panting so hard he had to grasp the back of a deep chair and wait a moment before he could speak.

"When that bullet almost got Raine, and the rest of you were watching, Sue scooted for the hallway, out there," Gore gasped. "I went after her, but she outran me. Raine, what shall we do?"

Navajo Raine had no chance to answer. From outside came the same deep, harsh voice he had heard ordering no more shooting.

"Fitch!" that voice was booming. "You, Kelly Fitch. We want a word with you, Kelly!"

Blake Duncan!" Kelly Fitch said grimly.

"Who is Duncan?" Raine asked, halting the banker when Fitch started towards the front door.

"Duncan owns the freight and stage line that operates out of here," Kelly Fitch said grimly. "I've locked horns with him over politics for several years, but we never had any real trouble. Let me see what's on his mind, Tom."

Stella Fitch and Sheriff Ed Saddler had put out the last two lamps in the big room, and as the lights were extinguished, the bull voice of Blake Duncan lifted in another angry shout.

"Go to the window that some of Duncan's pals shot out in my face a while ago, Kelly," Raine said. "But stand where the three-foot-thick adobe wall of this house will protect you."

The banker hurried away, moving through the room until he reached the window. He caught the drape, pulled it back, and swore grimly when he saw the huge mob of men spread out over the moonlit yard.

"What's the mean of this, Blake?" Kelly Fitch asked angrily.

"We'll ask the questions, you old schemer!" Blake Duncan yelled. "We've heard that you cleaned our bank out after closin' time today—took every cent of money that belongs to us depositors. We want to know where that money is at, Fitch!"

"You addle-witted fool!" Kelly Fitch howled. "I took no money out of that bank, and you ought to know it, Blake. Who told you any such tale?"

"Never mind about who tipped us off, Fitch," Duncan retorted. "You come along with us, open your vault, and show us that the money is there, if you're not lying!"

"Are you out of your mind, Duncan?" the banker yelped. "You know I wouldn't be fool enough to open that vault for a mob of armed men, regardless of who they were."

"And that goes as it lays, Duncan!" Sheriff Ed Saddler called through the front door.

The sheriff had flung the front door open, stepped outside, and was walking out to the broad steps, stopping in the full, white light of the big moon. There was a lot of shifting and muttering from the mob, but no one argued.

"Duncan, you and every man here are under arrest!" the sheriff said coldly. "One of you tried to blow the head off Navajo Tom Raine a while ago, when the Ranger appeared at a window. I want the man who fired that shot, and I'm holdin' the whole bunch of you until I have that man!"

"Tom, just look at that!" Banker Fitch cried, whirling away from the window.

He blinked into the darkness about him, hearing movements, but could not see who was moving.

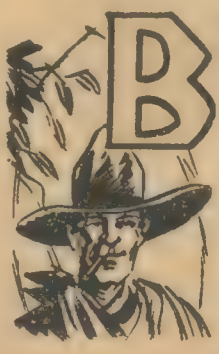
"Walter and I are over here, Kelly," the banker's wife called. "Isn't Tom up there, somewhere?"

"Tom, where are you, son?" The banker's voice lifted, a note of uneasiness in it.

There was no reply. Fitch hastily struck a match, got one of the lamps going. Walter Gore and Mrs. Fitch were down near the door, standing where an unbroken stretch of the thick adobe wall gave them ample protection. But Navajo Tom Raine was not in the room!

CHAPTER V

Judge Colt's Court!



BECAUSE the lantern was new and the globe was clean, it gave a good light, leaving no shadow pools in the corner of the small, low-ceilinged adobe house. Neal Gilbert hooked the bail of the lantern in a loop of heavy wire that was fastened to one of the ocotillo stalks that made the room's ceiling, hiding the heavier timbers of mesquite that supported the foot-thick dirt roof.

Gilbert's prominent blue eyes had a scared look, and there was a tenseness about his full-lipped mouth that meant jangling nerves. Runnels of sweat streaked his handsome face, and he took an expensive Stetson from his head, ran long fingers through a shock of curly yellow hair in a nervous way.

"Gilbert, I tell you we're askin' for trouble by lightin' that lantern!" Sam Wilson said sharply.

Sam Wilson's beady black eyes glit-

tered coldly in the lantern light, and his thin lips had a cruel twist now. Wilson wore two guns, and they rode in open-nosed holsters that were hung to his double-deck belt on swivels.

"Cool down, Sam," Neal Gilbert snarled. "This is Mexico. Sheriff Saddler won't come down here. Neither will that infernal Navajo Tom Raine."

Neal Gilbert glanced across the room as he quit speaking, his bold eyes resting on Sue Gore. She sat on the edge of a narrow bunk that was fastened to the walls, her shoulders square and straight. Her gray eyes flashed with defiance as she returned Gilbert's look. She was not bound, yet that fact brought her no comfort. Grady Burch stood close beside her, ready to seize her if she bolted towards door or window.

"Think I should tie the young lady to the bunk frame, Neal?" Burch asked.

Tonight he looked grosser, fatter than ever with his heavy-jowled red face and sleepy dark eyes.

"I'll say you'd better tie that gal!" Sam Wilson burst out. "Let her escape, and our South America stake is gone. Or do you and Gilbert think we can fiddle around and get our money out of that worthless land, up yonder in Mustang Sink?"

"Sam, just what's troublin' you?" Neal Gilbert asked, frowning.

"Holin' up here, for one thing!" Wilson growled. "We ain't more than three miles inside Mexico. I tried to get you two to take it easier, comin' down here. But you wouldn't listen to me. We run our hosses, and the bronc we loaded the girl on, plumb out!"

"Neal and I stocked this shack with provisions, months ago, Sam, just in case we did get into a tight spot and needed a place to hide out for a few days," Grady Burch said with a chuckle. "By tomorrow, rurales and gringo lawmen from north of the line will no doubt follow our sign to this place. But by that time we'll be long-gone, on rested horses, with plenty of provisions."

"We hope!" Sam Wilson scowled. "I tried to get you two to stop and listen now and then, on the way down here. Bright as the moon is, somebody could have follered us."

"We did stop and listen!" Neal Gilbert retorted.

"Oh, sure!" Wilson retorted. "But we stopped on high ground, every time. I tried to tell you that anybody trailin' us by sight would have stopped, too, every time we reined in on a ridgetop. We'd have heard him, if he hadn't."

"Sheriff Ed Saddler and Tom Raine were both inside Kelly Fitch's house," Neal Gilbert argued. "Since they're about the only two men we really have to watch out for, why can't you realize that neither of them could have followed us, San?"

"Ed Saddler don't worry me none!" Wilson said with a scowl. "But that green-eyed, Injun-brained Tom Raine does worry me. Sue got out of that house and come runnin' to you. From what she told us, you can danged well bet that Raine was not long in discoverin' that she was gone!"

"We had our horses, and the horse Sue rode down here, saddled and ready," Grady Burch said with a smile. "We got the town of Cowhide all worked up with that story that Kelly Fitch had cleaned out his bank. Blake Duncan and those other fellers started for Fitch's house, to demand that they be shown the money in the bank's vault. That was a sweet move!"

"And right there we made our big mistake!" Sam Wilson sneered. "We ought to have gone there and beefed Old Man Gore first, before startin' that riot—"

"Neal, is that true?" Sue Gore cut in harshly. "Would you actually murder my father?"

"Keep that lip of yours buttoned, Sam, until you can learn to talk without saying the wrong things!" Neal Gilbert glared at his hireling.

WILSON sneered at his boss. "Still playin' it the weasel's way, are you? But I can't see that it makes much difference what this girl knows, now. We'll force Old Man Gore to shovel out a fortune for her return, shore thing. But you and Grady ain't lame-brained enough to let the girl go, are you?"

"I ought to smash those words back down your neck, Sam!" Neal Gilbert flared. "But I'll let it go, for we've got trouble enough without fightin' among ourselves. Lift the lid on that rat-proof box down yonder by the stove. You'll find several bottles of rye in there, with the other stuff Grady and I cached here.

Fetch a bottle. Let's have a drink, and see if we can't talk Sue into writing her father a little note."

"Neal, you don't think I'd actually write my father a note and ask him to ransom me, do you?" Sue Gore asked.

"You'll write the note, my dear," Gilbert told her grimly. "Do it now, and save yourself a lot of trouble. Fetch her over to the table, Grady!"

Neal Gilbert turned his back, glancing towards Sam Wilson, who was at the far end of the room. Wilson was squating on his heel, feeling down into a big box that he had opened.

"Come along, girl!" Grady Burch said, reaching for Sue's arm.

She had not moved. She looked up at Grady Burch as he spoke, winced a little when his thick hand took hold of her arm, shutting down hard. Sue came to her feet, and suddenly Grady Burch was staggering backwards, howling at the top of his lungs as he pressed both hands to his face.

"What the blazes?" Neal Gilbert yelled, whirling around.

Sue Gore's right hand had slashed across Grady Burch's beefy face, her pointed nails cutting like the claws of a puma. Burch bawled an oath, bloody face savage with fury as he swung a fist at the girl's head. Sue bobbed lightly out of the way, stuck out a slim leg, and Burch tripped over her booted foot, howling as he smashed down across the bunk.

"You little wildcat!" Neal Gilbert yelled, and dived at the girl, strong arms ready to seize her.

But Sue Gore was like a flash of shadow, bounding nimbly aside, then darting past Neal Gilbert as he swore in exasperation and tried to whirl. Sue sprinted towards the doorway, only to come to a sudden halt.

Sam Wilson was blocking her way, grinning evilly. He held an opened quart of rye whisky in one hand, and a six-shooter in the other. He waved the drawn gun at the girl.

"Back up, hellcat!" he warned. "Get in reach of me, and I'll slap you silly with this shootin' pistol. Let that handsome bucko you've been so sweet on cripple you, if he feels like doin' it. But you ain't prancin' out of here."

"Sam, look out!" Neal Gilbert yelled. "Behind you, Sam."

Sam Wilson tensed, started to turn.

A six-shooter flashed down, glancing along the side of Sam Wilson's head, knocking him forward into the adobe shack.

"Tom Raine!" Sue Gore wailed, and leaped over the form of Sam Wilson.

Navajo Tom Raine swept the girl aside with one long arm, green eyes boring Neal Gilbert and Grady Burch. They were backing slowly down the room, pale, goggle-eyed in alarm.

"Hold it, you two!" Raine said coldly.

"You're out of bounds, Raine!" Neal Gilbert croaked. "An Arizona Ranger has no authority, down here, to arrest anyone."

"We'll argue about that when we get back to Cowhide!" Raine said grimly. "Hands up!"

His voice was drowned by the roar of a six-shooter. He had seen Sam Wilson roll over, however, and expected the flame and smoke and whizzing lead that slanted up towards him. He felt the wind of the bullet on his cheek, and dropped the hammer of his left-hand Colt, feeling the turquoise grips recoil in his palm. Sam Wilson's head rocked back from the blow of the bullet that ripped through his skull, but Raine had no time to see that.

GUNS were roaring at him from down the cabin, and only the haste to kill on the part of Neal Gilbert and Grady Burch saved the Ranger's life. As it was, a slug tore the skin along the right side of Raine's neck, and a second ripped across his thigh, burning like the touch of flame.

Then Raine's twin guns were thundering in a steady, rolling sound, and he was walking into the room behind the lancing flame, and billowing smoke, green eyes cold and bright as he watched Grady Burch reel, drop a smoking six-shooter, and stand there, coughing his life out in a red spray that spilled down his shirt front.

Neal Gilbert had made it to the far corner of the room, and was crouching behind a rusted cook-stove, shooting across the top of it. Raine felt a bullet pluck at the long hair beside his neck. He stopped, let the guns in his hands roar in unison.

Neal Gilbert came up from behind the stove as if a scorpion had stung him. He shouted something, but there was nothing human in the high, wailing

sound of his voice. He smashed against the stove, fell forward across it, and lay there, bouncing and twitching and bucking with the violent reflexes of a man, shot through the brain.

Raine turned and saw that Grady Burch was down now, blood still pouring from his mouth, although there was no longer any life in the man. The Ranger reloaded hi gun, walked down the room and out into the air, coughing a little from the powder gasses he had breathed.

Sue Gore came to him, eyes enormous in a face that looked bloodless in the moonlight. She took hold of him, shook his arm a little when he just stood there, looking down at her.

"Tom, you're all right, aren't you?" she asked shakily. "You're not hurt, are you, Tom Raine?"

"I was lucky, Sue," he said simply. "I got a few bullet blisters, but nothin' serious. Let's get out, before somebody comes along and sees me here. Those three crooks sure don't need any watchin', now."

He took her by the arm, hurried her out across the dry, dun earth to where a sickly stand of catclaw bushes clung to the lip of a shallow ditch. He picked her up and sat her in the saddle of a tall gray horse that was tied there.

"There are other horses, in the corral behind that shack, Tom," she said. "Shouldn't we get one of those, instead of riding double?"

"No time for that, young lady!" he snorted, mounting behind the saddle. "I'm out of bounds down here, as a ranger. In the second place I borrowed this horse without the owner's permission, when I got out of Kelly Fitch's house in time to see you hiking down the hill towards town with your handsome hero and his two snake-brained companions. I was too far away to do anything about it when I saw the four of you pile onto horses and hit the road that comes south from Cowhide towards the Border. I snagged this big gray from a hitchrack and followed. So I'm a horse-thief and a lawman out of bounds, thanks to you and your hare-brained doings!"

"Please, Tom!" Sue faltered. "Don't scold me. I'm so sorry and ashamed for the mess I made of things. Honestly I am."

She half turned in the saddle, and before Raine sensed her purpose her arms were around him, her face was buried on his shoulder, and she was making odd little whimpering sounds.

"Turn around, so I can guide this horse, before he falls down and breaks our necks!" the Ranger snorted. "And stop whining, or I'll spread you across that saddle and give you the whackin' I still think you deserve!"

The girl straightened up, and Raine knew both astonishment and contrition when he saw that tears were actually rolling down her cheeks, and that her mouth was quivering as she looked up at him. She turned obediently and picked up the reins she had tied to the saddle horn.

Raine looked at the soft halo of hair, saw that her slim shoulders were drooped dejectedly, and realized suddenly that maybe Walter Gore was not too much to blame for being too easy on his daughter. Sue was spirited and no doubt hard to manage. Yet she was a lovely girl, clean and fine and without any trace of viciousness in her character.

"The whole ugly deal is cleaned up now, Sue, so stop the snifflin'," Raine said kindly, and patted her shoulder.

"Gollies, Tom, give me that whackin' you've been talking about, if you want to!" Sue said in a choked voice. "I know I have it coming, and won't mind a bit, just as long as you don't hate me!"

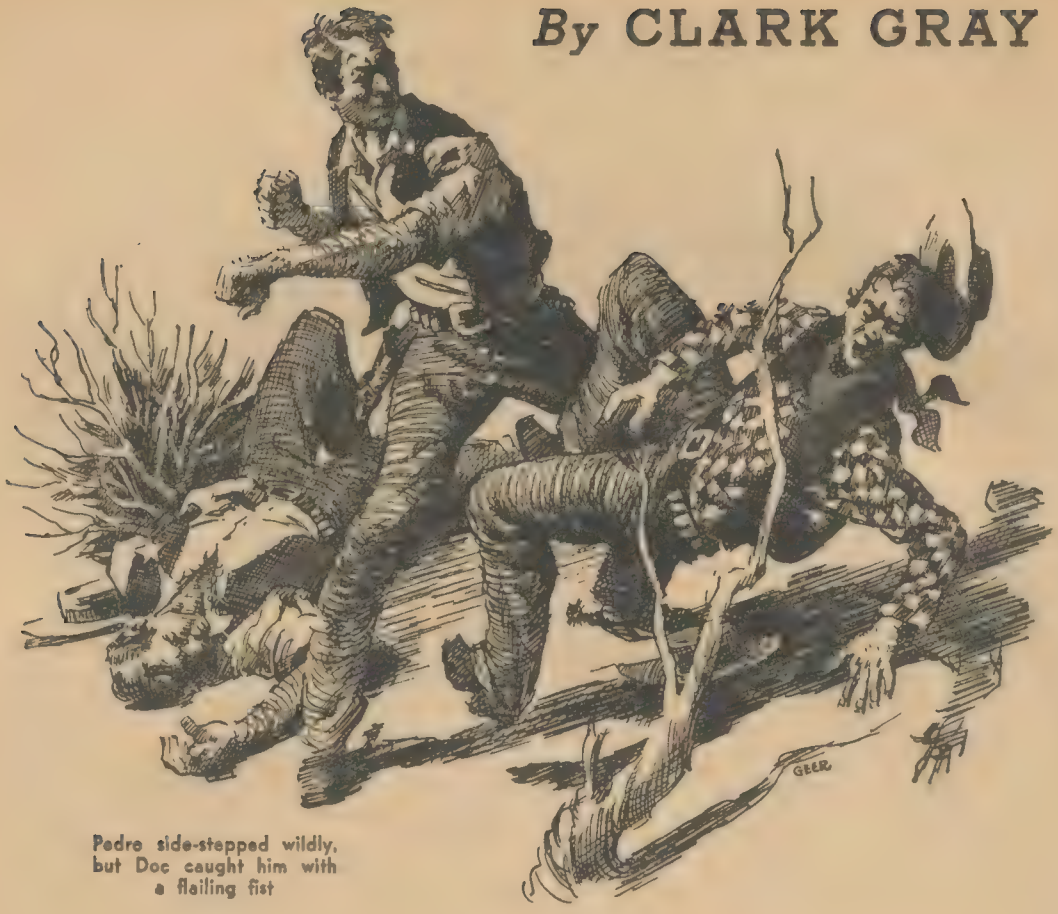
"No wonder your dad gets wrapped around your pretty little fingers!" Raine chuckled drily. "But hang onto those reins now, for I'm feeding this old pony the spurs. I've got goose-bumps on my hide that will stay there until I'm back on Arizona soil, where Rangers are supposed to stay!"

FEATURED NEXT ISSUE

WISE MEN OF WISDOM CITY

A Tombstone and Speedy Novelet by W. C. TUTTLE

By CLARK GRAY



Pedro side-stepped wildly, but Doc caught him with a flailing fist

Tortilla Tenderfoot

If Pedro Gonzales turned outlaw, he had to answer to his cleaver-wielding wife—if not, there was Doc Yates. . . .

BEING a sensible man, Pedro Gonzales refused to face his troubles until they faced him. He stretched his wiry legs under his table in the Elite Restaurant and stifled a yawn, lazily eyeing the giant bulk of his beloved wife, Anna.

He had received a letter that morning from Doc Yates, a friend of his foolish youth. Doc was to be released from prison, the letter said. And that, Pedro knew, was like releasing a hungry wolf among a flock of lambs. But Pedro was enjoying his present life too much to worry.

His brown-skinned, supple face was peaceful as his admiring eyes roved sleepily over Anna's mountainous form approaching. Anna carried from the kitchen a heaped-up plate of tortillas and frijoles fritos. Pedro let the threat of Doc Yates' impending return ease into the back of his mind.

"Here, love," Anna said, placing the

food before him with her craggy face beaming. "A little something to strengthen you till bedtime."

Pedro Gonzales smiled lazily. He and Anna had not been married long, but Anna understood him. She had given him his own table in her restaurant, where he could eat, drink, play his guitar, and bask in the dignity of one who is the husband of the proprietress. Pedro picked up his fork and waved it gallantly.

"By beautiful pet," he said, "when I married you and your restaurant, I became the happiest man in Texas."

Anna simpered and glanced quickly at the kitchen to see if the cook was listening. When Anna blushed, Pedro reflected, she looked more than ever like a baby mountain, topped by a dried-up willow tree and with scarred rock cliffs for a face.

Nevertheless, he loved her. And besides, she did not expect him to do the heavy work around the restaurant.

HE rolled a tortilla in his thin, brown fingers and popped it into his mouth. Then he saw Anna raise her head, staring at the door of the restaurant. And when Pedro followed her gaze, he sucked in a swifth breath and almost choked.

The man who hulked in the doorway was large, nearly as large as Anna. He had a scar on the underside of his chin, a black-handled six-gun on his hip, and his thin lips twisted in a lop-sided leer.

"Howdy, Pedro," Doc Yates said hoarsely. "Did yuh git my letter?"

Pedro swallowed his tortilla, struggling valiantly against a premonition of disaster. His chickens were coming home to roost, and he did not like it.

"Go away, please," he said. "The restaurant, she is closed."

Grinning, Doc Yates advanced into the restaurant. His big body swung from side to side with a rolling gait that reminded Pedro uneasily of the lockstep.

"That ain't no way to treat an old pal," Doc Yates croaked from the side of his mouth. "I been away a long time, Pedro. I'm lonesome fer the home folks."

"Anna," he said, "this gentleman is Doc Yates. A friend of my ignorant youth."

Anna peered sharply at Doc. Anna was a hard-headed business woman, who could size up a man before he had said ten words. In dismay, Pedro saw now that Anna read Doc Yates like a book. And from the raw pucker of her mouth, she didn't like what she read.

"Howdy, stranger," Anna boomed. With people she disliked, Anna had a grating, rawboned voice that scraped Pedro's nerves mercilessly. "Yuh want to eat?"

Doc Yates inclined his head in a sarcastic bow.

"Yeah, if it ain't too much trouble," he croaked. "While yuh're gone I kin talk over old times with Pedro."

Wordlessly Anna turned and waddled toward the kitchen. Pedro watched her broad back, frowning thoughtfully. Usually Anna ordered from the restaurant anybody she disliked. Perhaps, he thought, she tolerated Doc because the big man was his friend. But he shook his head. There had been another friend of his—a dance hall girl named Carmelita. Pedro shuddered at that memory.

"Well, Pedro," Doc Yates said, breaking into his thoughts. "Yuh got a nice setup here. A wife, good food, a soft life. Beats swimmin' cows across the river, eh?"

"Please, Doc—" Quaking, Pedro held up a hand for silence. "Anna, she does not know about the old days. I—I do not think she like it if she know."

Doc Yates laughed hoarsely. "I don't reckon the law would like it neither, huh? Okay, Pedro, I'll keep yore little secret. I jest want some information, then I'll drift."

"Information?" Pedro's heart began to slug his ribs. "I do not have information, Doc. I know nothing about nothing."

"Yuh kin find this out for me." Doc Yates frowned, and his thin, lop-sided lips twisted menacingly. "Or else I'll spill my story about that time you'n me crossed the Grande with—"

"No, Doc!" Pedro hastily interrupted. "I—I will help you. Only—" he looked fearfully toward the kitchen door—"only don't tell the law and Anna. Especially Anna!"

GRINNING Doc leaned back in his chair and lit a cigarette. "I thought so," he said. Then he flicked

the match on the newly scrubbed floor and bent forward. He spoke in a hoarse mutter.

"Down in the pen, I heard about the trail drive out of here last spring. Five thousand head, they said. Every rancher in the county had cattle in the bunch. Okay, Pedro, I want to find who's fetchin' back the money for them cattle. And when. Tell me that, Pedro, an' yore secret is safe."

Pedro Gonzales raised his brown hands hopelessly to heaven. But heaven offered no help, so presently he lowered them again.

"But, Doc," he groaned, nobody knows who has that money except the ranchers and the sheriff. And they will not tell. The hills are full of outlaws, all of them trying to steal that trail drive money before it reaches town. I—I cannot find that out, Doc."

"Okay." Doc's eyes slitted and turned to ice. "I'll start with Anna—"

"No! Let me think." Desperately Pedro knuckled his scalp. He reflected hurriedly that Carmelita Ryan, his old girl friend who sang at the Panhandle Saloon, knew everything that happened in town, and most things before they happened. Carmelita would know about the money. But Anna had ordered him never to see Carmelita.

Pedro remembered how Carmelita had smiled at him once in the restaurant. Anna's craggy face had turned purple with jealousy and she had chased Carmelita off with a meat cleaver. Pedro shuddered.

"Well," Doc Yates prodded hoarsely. "I ain't got all night."

"I—I will try," Pedro said hastily. "It is dangerous, Doc. You do not know how dangerous. But when you have eaten, I will try."

Anna's tortillas were never better. Doc Yates crammed them down wolfishly between great swigs of beer. Anna lowered her mountainous bulk into a creaking chair and studied Doc through narrowed eyelids. And nervously Pedro studied Anna.

Pedro loved his mountainous wife, but he could not forget how she had chased Carmelita Ryan away with the meat cleaver. Pedro had once seen her manhandle a drunken gunman with that same cleaver. When the battle was over, the gunman had babbled insanely to be taken to jail for protection from this female maniac. Pedro sighed and switched his gaze to Doc Yates.

Morosely he watched the scar on the underside of Doc's chin. Every time Doc swallowed, the scar wriggled like a tiny snake. Finally Doc rose, grunting with satisfaction.

"My pet," Pedro suggested timidly to Anna, "I think I go to the saloon with my old friend. It is okay, no?"

"No!" Anna said, and Pedro noted in alarm that her voice had that grating, rawboned quality. You ain't goin' to no saloon to flirt with them painted hussies. If you want to drink, drink here."

"But—" Pedro sank back into his chair, and panic stabbed him through the chest. "But, adorable one, I—"

"We don't need no drink." Doc Yates came to his rescue, grinning his lop-sided grin. "We'll jest go to my hotel room an' talk. That okay, ma'am?"

"All right." Anna gave in reluctantly. "But Pedro, you stay away from that Carmelita Ryan, that hussy! And be home by eleven, or I'll—"

She left the sentence hanging. Pedro shuddered and turned quickly away to take down his sombrero and six-gun from the wall. He did not want to see her significant glance at the kitchen, where the meat cleaver rested on its nail.

THE Panhandle Saloon blazed with light and echoed to the rafters with the noise of music and pounding feet. Pedro stood just outside the entrance. Light shuttled in weird patterns through the swinging batwings on his brown, anxious face. Presently Doc Yates shoved through the batwings from within.

"She's there," Doc reported. "She says she'll talk to you in her private settin' room, upstairs. You can sneak in the back way." Doc's lop-sided grin split evilly in the shuttling light. "Some pumpkin, Pedro! You never tole me the gal wuz good lookin'."

Pedro grunted his distaste. Carmelita was too nice a girl for Doc's kind.

"Wait here," he said, "If I find out, it will be quick."

He rounded the saloon and entered cautiously through the back door, passing a half-dozen beer barrels stacked in the hallway. He hated to sneak in like this, but it was necessary. If Anna ever

found out he had come here, her wrath would know no bounds.

He pulled out his handkerchief and wiped sweat from hs forehead.

Carmelita waited for him at the head of the stairs. She smiled when she saw him, and took his hand.

"*Querido,*" she cooed. "I have waited so long for you to come and see me."

She was a tall, willowy girl with a flower in her dark hair. She had rich lips covering teeth that shone like new ivory. Pedro snatched away his hand.

"Let us go to your sitting room, Carmelita," he said hurriedly. "My wife—she do not know I am here."

Carmelita's dark eyes flashed. She turned her back and stalked down the hall. Pedro followed at a nervous tip-toe, his gun sliding on his hip. At the end of the hall, Carmelita led him into her sitting room. Pedro sank into a chair and heaved a gusty sigh. His hands, he noticed, shook as if he had the fever.

"Your wife!" Carmelita stood before him, hand on hips, and her dark eyes glittered. "Phooey. That—that meat-mountain. I love you, too, *querido.* It is not fair for her to have you always."

"Ah, yes. It is too true." Pedro was beginning to recover himself, now that he was protected by four walls from prying eyes. He smiled wanly at Carmelita, then heaved a sigh. "But I will be truthful, Carmelita. I love my Anna. She is a wonderful cook, and she understands me, even if she is not beautiful."

Carmelita's rich lips widened in a smile.

"Pedro," she said gently, "am I beautiful?"

"Like the stars in the sky," Pedro said. "Like music on a summer night. Like the sea-breeze in the hot countries. But, *querido,* you cannot cook like my Anna. Nor do you own a restaurant."

Carmelita laughed, and it was like the tinkling of a silver bell. "You are a fool, Pedro. And I love you for it. But—your friend told me you wanted to know something."

"Ah, yes!" Pedro dropped his brown hands sorrowfully in his lap. "My friend,

[*Turn page*]

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he is a bad hombre. He wants to steal the money that belongs to the cattlemen, the money from the trail drive to Kansas. I must find who will have it, so he can steal it."

Carmelita started, a slow frown creasing her forehead. "But," she objected, "you do not have to do what this man says. Report him to the sheriff."

"No, no! I cannot do that. You see—" Pedro flushed—"there is a matter of some cows that crossed the border twenty years ago. It is sad. I was young and foolish then. You understand why I must not make my friend angry!"

"Oh! Of course!" Carmelita nodded sympathetically. "It is a bad thing he asks you to do, but you must do it. *Querido*, I will help you, even in this."

SHE bent forward and took his hand. "The Sheriff Olson rides to Antelope Springs tomorrow morning. He will collect the money there and bring it into town." She frowned thoughtfully. "*Querido*, the Sheriff Olson is swift and deadly with a gun. Perhaps he will have the good fortune to kill your friend."

"No." Pedro shook his head dolefully. "It is too much to hope. But many thanks, my adorable pet." He rose.

"I must go now. Before my Anna decides to come searching for me. If she finds that I was here, *querida*, may the good *Dios* protect you from her meat cleaver!"

Pedro moved cautiously down the saloon stairway, with Carmelita guarding his rear. His heart chugged like a laboring engine, and sweat beaded his brown face. A few more steps, he thought, and he would be in the dark alley behind the saloon. Then he would be safe, and Anna need never know of this visit.

At the foot of the steps he turned and waved goodbye to Carmelita, who stood halfway down the staircase. She smiled and blew him a kiss. That instant, shots broke loose inside the saloon.

Pedro cast one fearful glance at the door leading from the stairway into the barroom. The door was closed now, but the shots blasted just beyond it. Pedro dove for the alley.

Too late, he notiecd the beer barrels in his pathway. He tumbled, and the barrels teetered and collapsed about his ears in a thundering racket. At the same instant, the barroom door burst open, and a drunken, bearded man backed through with two smoking six-guns bucking in gnarled hands.

Wildly Pedro struggled to disentangle himself from the beer barrels. Then the drunken gunman turned, and Pedro saw savagery glitter in the man's greenish eyes. The gunman triggered. Screaming lead nicked a beer barrel an inch from Pedros' ear.

Pedro yelped frantically. He pushed a barrel aside and swayed to his feet. The gunman fired again. Pedro's sombrero kicked sideways off his head. Desperately then, Pedro saw he had to defend himself, and he fumbled for his six-gun.

Pedro had worn a gun for years. But only because it was customary. He had never been in a gunfight. When shooting started he had generally had urgent business elsewhere.

Shaking with terror now, he got his six-gun free from holster as the drunken gunman fired a third time, plunking another bullet into a beer barrel. Pedro eared hammer, lowered his muzzle on the gunman's chest, and triggered frantically.

The gunman rolled sideways. Sudden silence pounded like thunder in Pedro's ears. The gunman fell forward on his face, his right arm almost touching Pedro's shiny boots.

Dumbly Pedro leaned against the wall, his bones rubbery with weakness. Through the barroom door he saw faces cautiously peering over table tops. A voice boomed hollowly. Then Carmelita was beside him, clasping his arm.

"My hero," Carmelita cooed. "My darling, I love you a thousand times more than ever."

Pedro felt the warmth of her red lips on his mouth, and that woke him like a bucket of cold water.

"I—I must go," he gasped. "Anna will find out—"

"But you killed a bad hombre," Car-

melita protested. "You can't leave now. You are a hero."

Pedro pulled himself away and stepped through the door into the darkness of the alley.

"Heroes," he gulped, "do not make good husband. At least, not to my Anna."

DOC YATES had vanished from the batwings in front of the saloon, and Pedro turned trembling up the street toward home. He had enough troubles without Doc. He wondered morbidly if anyone in the barroom had recognized him.

Pedro had never killed a man. In other circumstances, he might have strutted with pride at this exhibition of his prowess. For the man had been drunk and kill-crazy, obviously a bad hombre. But as Pedro approached the restaurant, he reflected fearfully that the drunken gunman was only a worrisome detail compared to Anna.

For if word of tonight's gunfight reached Anna, Pedro's goose was not only cooked, but scorched. And Pedro knew it.

He reached the front of the restaurant and found it locked. Evidently Anna had retired into the living quarters at the rear of the building. Pedro turned off the boardwalk and rounded the dark corners, conscious of a flutter of panic in him. At the back door of the restaurant, he knocked with a quaking hand.

A light flared inside. Anna's heavy tread creaked across the floor, then the door flung back and Anna's mountainous form confronted him. She peered sharply at him across a lighted lamp, her craggy face suspicious.

"Hello, my pet," Pedro quavered. "I —I could hardly wait to return to you, my precious love."

Anna's sharp eyes glittered, and Pedro noted in alarm that a purple flush mounted her neck. She moved the lamp closer to his face.

"Where," Anna croaked in her grating, rawboned voice, "did you git that lipstick?"

Too late, Pedro remembered that Carmelita Ryan had kissed him. Frozen in

[*Turn page*]

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Do you have that constant urge to write but the fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what the former editor of Liberty said on this subject:

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horror, he could only stand and blink, watching that purple flush crawl menacingly up Anna's face. This was disaster, he knew. His goose was not only scorched now; it was charred. Anna opened her mouth, then closed it, then opened it again.

"Git!" Anna roared.

Pedro got. He ran across the darkened yard, panic drumming wildly in him. He was thankful that it was no worse than this. At least, she had not chased him with the meat cleaver.

At the stable on the back end of the restaurant lot, he turned and glanced fearfully behind. Anna had slammed the door, and as he watched, the light winked out and darkness descended over the restaurant. Pedro got out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead. For tonight, he was safe. But tomorrow—well, that promised to be quite another matter.

Miserably he kicked together a pile of straw. He pulled off his boots and hung his sombrero carefully on a nail. He had better sleep, he told himself. Tomorrow he would need his strength.

But for the first time in his life, Pedro could not sleep. When he closed his eyes, he saw Doc Yates' leering face, or the wildly shooting gunman, or Carmelita Ryan. Or Anna's meat cleaver. Pedro missed the soft, mountainous bulk of his wife beside him. Wearily he got up and smoked a cigarette.

Toward morning, he dozed in fitful snatches, dreaming of Doc Yates. He woke with a start at daylight to see Doc Yates in person standing over him. Doc's lop-sided leer had vanished overnight, replaced by a black frown. From Pedro's prone position on the straw, the scar beneath Doc's grimy chin glittered white and brutal.

"That gent yuh killed," Doc Yates croaked from the side of his mouth, "was my partner. I need a new partner now, to help me pull this job here." Doc's grin crawled evilly across his face. "Maybe yuh kin guess who my new sidekick's goin' to be, Pedro."

STIFFLY Pedro crawled upright, stamping his feet into his boots. So

Doc was forcing him into outlawry! A flicker of anger pulsed through him.

"I do not think I will be an outlaw," he said.

Doc Yates laughed hoarsely.

"I figger yuh will," Doc croaked. "Yuh done gone this far, so I reckon a little farther won't hurt none. Or do yuh want me to go to the law?"

Pedro bit his lip. To cover his rising fury he bent and brushed straw from his trousers. Was this never to end?

"How do I know you will go away when it is over?" he asked grimly.

"Ain't I done said so? Why, yuh won't even have to fire a shot. I jest want yuh to stand up with me and hold a gun on the hombre with the money. Then I'll leave this country fer good, an' yuh kin go back to yore big fat Anna."

Pedro scratched his chin thoughtfully. That would not be so easy, going back to Anna. Still, he reflected, he might be able to explain. After all, she loved him. Perhaps she would forgive. While if he refused to do what Doc Yates asked, Pedro knew that Doc would report him to the law—and to Anna. He would then become an outlaw in reality. And his chances with Anna then would be null, if not completely void. Dolefully Pedro sighed.

"I am a rat in a trap," he complained bitterly to Doc Yates. "If I stay in the trap, you shoot me. If I come out the little hole, you chop my head off. You are a bad hombre, Doc, and I do not like you."

"I don't give a ding-dong hoot about that," Doc Yates grinned. "Git yore hoss an' let's ride. In case yore interested, I wuz listenin' outside Carmelita's door last night. I heard everything she said. So let's ride to Antelope Springs, Pedro. And no funny business."

Guiding his horse through the restaurant side-yard toward Main Street, Pedro glimpsed Anna's gigantic figure through the window. Her eyes were on him, and he saw that her face was red from crying. She moved through the restaurant, and when he jogged down Main Street beside Doc Yates, he saw her standing on the front porch, her

[*Turn page*]

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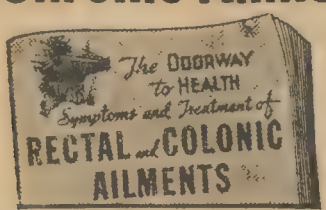

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eyes following him like those of a hurt, faithful dog.

Remorse stabbed hard through Pedro and of a sudden he wanted desperately to go back and explain things to her. But one glance at Doc Yate's lop-sided face told him that he had no chance for that now. Later, perhaps.

Pedro wiped the back of his hand across his eyes and abrupt hatred for Doc Yates swept through him like a gust of hot wind in an empty building. And yet he could do nothing but continue on with Doc Yates, who rode stolidly up the street toward the edge of town.

Ten miles and an hour later, Pedro topped a rise and looked past Doc's burly figure toward Antelope Springs, nestled like a blue gem in the hollow of the hills.

Doc Yates reined his pony to a halt, then quickly whirled and galloped back across the rise, out of sight of the springs.

"Git down," he muttered hoarsely to Pedro. "He's there!"

Grimly Pedro turned back and dismounted. Afoot, Doc led the way back to a spot where a thin finger of scrub blackjacks swallowed the trail. Doc tied the horses out of sight, then grunted:

"Gimme yore gun belt."

WOODEN-FACED, Pedro obeyed, fighting down a rising resentment. He told himself bitterly that he should have shot Doc outside the saloon last night. But it was too late now. Doc stripped the cartridges from the belt and emptied a shining cascade of shells from the gun. Then he returned it, grinning brutally.

"Jest to make sure yuh don't git no notions," Doc said.

Then Doc posted him on the near side of the trail, while Doc himself hunkered in the blackjacks on the far side. Pedro pulled his bandana from his pocket and wrapped it bleakly around his face. And then he waited.

Five minutes later the horseman entered the blackjack finger, traveling at a

steady jog-trot. Pedro pulled his empty gun, feeling sudden sweat roll down his temples and along the bandana edge. Across the trail, he caught an abrupt flash of movement, and then it was too late to change his mind.

Doc Yates stepped from the blackjacks, six-gun menacing the rider.

"Hold it!" Doc shouted. "Lift 'em, pronto!"

The horseman slewed to a halt. Pedro raised from the brush, recognizing Sheriff Olson. Olson was a big, blond man with soft blue eyes. But the sheriff's eyes were iron-hard now, as he stepped from his horse at Doc Yates' order.

"Where's that dinero?" Pedro heard

[*Turn page*]

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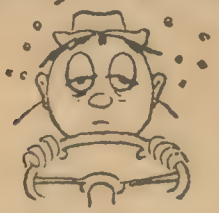

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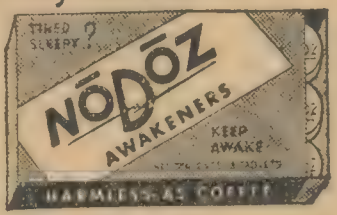

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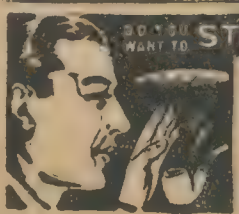

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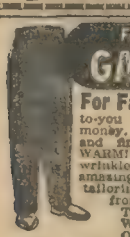

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Doc growl. "The trail-drive money. Fork it over, quick."

Sheriff Olson's eyes flicked, and with a quick movement his hand darted inside his shirt. Doc Yates lunged savagely and dropped his gun barrel across Olson's scalp.

The sheriff groaned and half fell to his knees. Pedro sucked in a swift breath of horror as Doc Yates struck again with vicious cruelty. The sound of the gun barrel on Olson's head was like a pole-axed steer. Watching in growing rage, Pedro saw Olson sprawl heavily in the dirt.

Pedro Gonzales had never been a fighting man. Even when he had killed the gunslinger last night it had been fear that moved him, not anger. But now a raging blizzard of fury jerked him forward like a puppet. He reached Doc's side with lips flat across his brown-skinned face, eyes blazing savagely.

"You are finished, Doc," he said.

And he lashed out a swift, booted foot, kicking Doc Yates' gun sailing through the air.

Doc Yates' jaw dropped, and sudden murder settled like a black cloud across his scarred face. "Blast you!" he grunted, and then he lunged.

Pedro side-stepped wildly, knowing Doc outweighed him forty pounds. But Doc hit him with a flailing fist. Stars caromed past Pedro's vision, but then, magically, Pedro seemed to glimpse Anna's mountainous bulk c h a r g i n g through the whirling colors. Anna held a cleaver in her hand.

Pedro staggered and got his feet under him and turned as Doc scooped up his six-gun and eared hammer. Pedro saw the hammer click back from the frame of the gun. He saw Doc Yates' lop-sided mouth twist in a wolfish snarl.

And then something sailed over his shoulder and struck Doc Yates on the forehead. Doc's mouth flew open, and Doc dropped his gun and sank in his tracks. Pedro saw the glittering object that had struck Doc fall in the dust at Doc's feet. He stared, and then he knew he had not seen a vision after all. The object at Doc's feet was a meat cleaver.

THE confusion only lasted a few minutes. Rough first aid for Sheriff Olson, tears from Anna, a rope for Doc Yates. Then suddenly everything was quiet.

Anna sat on a rock before him in the middle of the trail, cradling her meat cleaver, but with a tender look on her craggy face. Sheriff Olso sat up in the dirt, shaking his head groggily. And Doc Yates opened his eyes, cursed, and strained futilely at the rope around his wrists.

"I think," Anna said severely to Pedro, "you have some explaining to do."

She was trying to look stern, but Pedro caught the softness in her eyes. Of a sudden Pedro knew why she had followed him and Doc. She had read Doc's evil intentions like a book. She was only trying to protect him, Pedro. No matter who else she chased with her meat

[*Turn page*]

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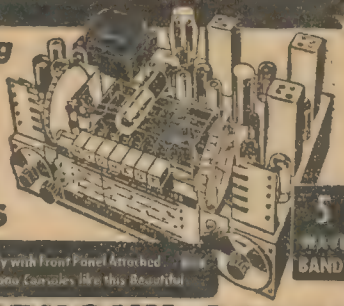

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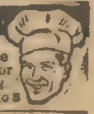

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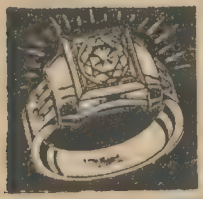

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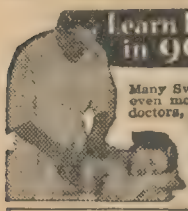

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cleaver, Pedro knew now she would never chase him. He had been wrong in not trusting her at first.

He smiled, then glanced somberly at Sheriff Olson, aware of a sudden urge to make a clean breast of this whole business. He cleared his throat.

"I have to confess," he said bravely to Sheriff Olson, "that twenty years ago this bad hombre and I stole some cows and swam them across the Rio Grande. They were very poor cows."

Then he told the rest of it. How Doc Yates had blackmailed him. How he had been forced to visit Carmelita. How he had killed the drunken gunman. At the conclusion, he sighed dolefully.

"No doubt the cows we stole are all dead now. But nevertheless, I am ready to go to jail."

Sheriff Olson grinned and got shakily to his feet.

"Pedro," Olson said, "yuh done the cattlemen of this county a big favor today. I figger they'll forgit yuh came along on this raid. And about that business twenty years ago, didn't yuh never hear of the statute of limitations? After this long, they can't nobody do nothin' to yuh fer that crime. So jest fergit it."

"You mean—" Speechless, Pedro turned to stare at Anna. Sudden joy gusted through him, and he saw Anna smile tenderly.

"My pet," he said, "what is this the sheriff speaks of? This imitation statue? I do not understand."

"I'll explain it," Anna said softly, "while you eat breakfast. Let's go home, sweetheart."

"Home?" Pedro grinned happily. "To the restaurant?"

He got to his feet and waved an eloquent hand at the sky. "My adorable pet, I love you like the stars in the heavens. Like music on a summer night. Like the sea-breeze in the hot countries."

He hesitated, thinking of breakfast. Then he added thoughtfully:

"My wonderful one—a little more chili pepper in the frijoles next time, eh?"

Read EXCITING WESTERN Every Issue!

TRAIL BLAZERS

(Continued from Page 8)

49 feet high, having made an average growth in height of more than 4 feet a year. That's about maximum. This same tree when cut at 6 inches above the ground measured 13 inches in diameter, not including the bark. The top of the first 16 foot log was a little more than 8 inches across.

Average trees, even when grown in fairly open stands and under good soil conditions will run smaller, say 8 to 10 inches in diameter and be from 30 to 40 feet high. That's still fast growing for a tree.

Loblolly pine tree farmers usually do best growing their tree crops to saw timber size. That means a fairly long wait for their foresight to show real dividens—20 to 30 years on ground set out to freshly planted seedlings. Such a proposition is actually a long term investment in conservation and reforestation.

There is no need to fear any future wood surplus. As a matter of cold, uncompromising fact the pines—all kinds—are rapidly becoming scarce not just in this country but the world over. Hard to realize maybe when we think of our still vast western forests. Or Canada's long reaches of pulpwood pine stands. But it is nevertheless true.

Undeveloped Resources

Already neither Europe nor Asia is able to meet its own wood needs. There are of course the still undeveloped forest resources of the tropics. But these are largely cabinet woods and specialty items. They can never take the place for utility, economy and variety of uses of the woods in great pine forest belt of the Temperate Zone.

Not that we intended getting this deep into the Forest conservation angle and its personal importance to all of us—in the world as well as here in the United States—but according to a late report of Lyle F. Watts, Chief Forester of the U. S. Forest Service we are presently draining our own saw timber at a rate that exceeds annual growth by more than 50 percent. In plain figures we are overdrawing our saw-timber bank balance by about 18.6 billion board feet a year.

That kind of puts a patriotic as well as a dollars and cents aspect on the whole idea of tree farming. Every tract, every acre of new grown trees, or of trees marketed on a sustained yield basis helps block the annual overdraft

[*Turn page*]

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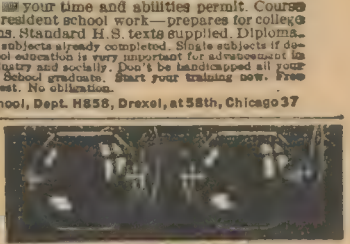

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in our available saw timber reserves. And it makes pine growing a pretty safe looking effort from the standpoint of future income and security.

Perhaps that's why an increasing number of farmers and land-owners in the southern pine belt, are taking to growing timber as a crop on at least part of their acreage. . .usually the less tillable part or land not suitable for other forms of agriculture.

The Job of Thinning

In the long run loblolly pine grown on such land will bring in a bigger net return than any other commodity. Nor is the long wait for an appreciable and profitable saw timber yield a total loss financially. During the early intervening years a certain amount of thinnings can be cut and sold as cordwood, or peeled posts and poles.

Thinning a stand is an important part of the tree farmer's job because it stimulates a better and more rapid growth in the trees that are left.

In the case of loblolly pines good practice is to begin thinning when the trees reach a diameter of between 3 and 6 inches. The heights are usually at that time from 25 to 35 feet. A good rule to follow is to hold back until the material thinned out will pay a profit, even a slight profit, over the cost of the operation.

Where the thinning is mainly to obtain firewood, poles or posts it can be done earlier in the life of the stand.

Two Methods

Two general thinning methods are used. In the first the smaller, crooked, stunted and defective trees are removed. This gives more growing space to the best trees on each acre. In the second method the largest trees are thinned out. By this means a higher immediate annual profit is clipped from the crop, and, theoretically at least, the smaller trees are given room to expand and develop.

In actual practice, however, it has been found that the first method affords the fastest growth rate for the stand because it permits the best grade, and best formed trees to keep on growing to maturity. When the formerly stunted trees are left it takes them some time to recover from their original setback and reach the previously attained growing rate of the bigger trees.

There is more to it, of course. Things such

as keeping fire out of your tree farm. Fire is the arch enemy of the forest, and all wood land enterprises large or small.

But in the main tree farming—the notion of farming trees as a steady crop rather than simply cutting down a woodland section for a quick return—can be a profitable and very interesting outdoor "business." It is catching on rapidly . . . throughout the country. And notably in the Pacific Northwest's cutover timber lands and the South's broad loblolly pine belt.

Think it over, you western-minded hombres and hombresses. We'll be chinin' with you-all again next issue!

—CAPTAIN RANGER

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

TOMBSTONE Jones and Speedy Smith come in assorted sizes, as most of you readers well know—Tombstone standing in the neighborhood of seven feet above sea level in his boots, while Speedy just shades five and a half feet by an inch. However, they have in common the fact that both are about as meaty as fish-poles. Also, both have the rather questionable ability of turning the sublime to the ridiculous without the slightest effort whatsoever.

Which is what they proceed to do at great length in WISE MEN OF WISDOM CITY, the featured novelet in the next issue of EXCITING WESTERN. We think you'll find it one of the most entertaining of W. C. Tuttle's stories about these two funny but effective Cattle Association detectives.

The boys first off meet up with a tall, thin character, with a sober-looking face and rather thick glasses, who is the only passenger to get off the train at the Broken River depot about which Tombstone and Speedy are lounging.

"I beg your pardon," he said quietly, "but did either of you gentlemen ever hear of Henry Van-Jones?"

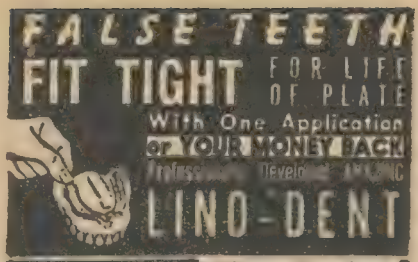
"Huh?" grunted Tombstone. "Ol' Hank Jones? Why, that's m' uncle Hank! He's been missin' for years!"

"Hank Jones?" repeated the young man. "No, I—I never heard of Hank Jones. My uncle was named Henry. I distinctly mentioned the name. The last name was Van-Jones. Hyphenated, you know."

"Hank was spifflicated, prob'ly," said Speedy.

"Van-Jones," the young man stated once more. "There is a hyphen between Van and

[*Turn page*]



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Jones. I hope you understand. It is the little bar which keeps the two words apart."

"Out in this country we use bars to git us together," said Speedy, "not keep us apart. What does yore uncle do?"

"I do not know what his occupation may be, sir. You see, I am Ursel Reinhart Fish, of the Boston Fishes, and—"

"Well," interrupted Tombstone, "yo're a danged long ways from water, I'll say that for yuh, my friend. Meet Speedy Smith, one of the Oklahomy Smiths. My name's Jones, and my family's pretty much world-wide."

"I am very glad to meet both of you, gentlemen. The truth is, I am Ursel Reinhart Fish, the Second. My father is dead. My mother passed away a year ago. So presently I'm alone in the world, you might say. My grandfather was Ursel Reinhart Fish, the First."

"There was seven of us boys, as I remember it," said Tombstone. "Pa couldn't count, I don't reckon, so he jist named us and forgot the numbers. He told us that sooner or later we'd probably all get numbers anyway. Mr. Fish, how come yuh stopped at Broken River?"

"Well," Ursel said and grinned slowly, "I couldn't remember the name of my destination, so I simply told the train conductor that it was some godforsaken place in this country, and he said there wasn't a more godforsaken place than Broken River."

"Check," said Speedy. "That bein' yore wish—yuh've shore got it."

Tombstone started to say something, but the depot agent came hurrying around from his office, bearing a telegram.

"Glad yuh haven't pulled out, Jones," he said. "I just got this telegram from a feller named Jim Keaton. Do yuh know him? Oh, sure yuh do; it was him yuh sent that wire to awhile back, wasn't it. Sec'etary of the Cattle Association or something like that, ain't he?"

Speedy grunted, and because Tombstone couldn't read, he opened the telegram which read:

YOU ARE WRONG IN PRESUMING SALARIES RAISED. AM RUSHING LETTER INSTRUCTIONS TO WISDOM CITY. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AND YOUR MOUTH SHUT. THIS IS DANGEROUS JOB.

"Where-at on earth is Wisdom City?" asked Tombstone.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the agent. "You go from here to Stove Pipe Creek. That's straight south of here. Then you cross the

divide into Paradise Valley. I've heard that Wisdom City is just about seventy-five miles from here, as the crow flies."

"As the crow flies," said Speedy dismally. "That makes it at least a hundred and fifty."

"Wisdom City and Paradise Valley," said Ursel Reinhart Fish. "Hm-m-m. This is what I would call a great coincidence."

"Yeah?" queried Tombstone. "How come?"

"That's where I want to go," said the young man, grinning. "I recall the name now. That is my destination."

"Wait a minute," said Speedy. "You ain't got no horse and saddle. And a horse, Ursel, my boy, will cost you a hundred dollars, a saddle at least sixty."

Ursel took out a billfold, carelessly extracted two one hundred dollar bills and handed them to Speedy.

"Make it two hundred," he said. "I want a pair of those little wheels to put on my heels, too. They sound good."

"Well, may I be the victim of a vinegaroon!" whispered Tombstone. "Speedy, our one pair has done blossomed into three of a kind!"

And so did these three, though hardly of a kind, set out for Wisdom City and trouble. Bullet trouble of a most deadly nature. But the boys go about quelling same with characteristic inefficiency, and if you don't get more than the usual number of laughs out of WISE MEN OF WISDOM CITY, we'll be mightily surprised.

A second big novelet, MAN-BREAKER RANGE, by Gunnison Steele, deals with the troubles of young Johnny Thunder in getting across a range full of outlaws with the gold he'd discovered in the mountains.

As an example of the colorful action in store for you in this one, we give you below a brief excerpt from the story's opening pages:

Johnny unbuttoned his sheepskin and watched with a sharpened interest as the three riders pulled their horses to a halt a few yards away.

The chalk-eyed man spoke. His voice had a scratchy twang. "Howdy, friend. I'm Joe Badger, deputy sheriff from Gunlock. This is Russ Cormant," he said, indicating the blocky man. "The other jigger is Ben Jory. They're partners in the Cross L outfit over yonder a ways."

"Name's Johnny Thunder."

"Where yuh headed?"

"Gunlock. How far is it?"

"That depends. Where yuh from?"

"Depends," Johnny Thunder drawled, not liking this. "I been lots of places and I'm from all of 'em. Looks like snow, don't it?"

Ben Jory laughed, a low, amused sound without humor.

[*Turn page*]

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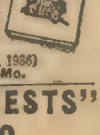

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The blocky man, Cormant, demanded suddenly, "What yuh got on the pack mule?"

"That, mister," Johnny said flatly, "is my business!"

Deliberately, then, Deputy Joe Badger swung to the ground, while the other two cautiously edged their horses around to flank Johnny.

"Maybe we'd better just find out what yuh've got in that pack yuh're so cagey about," said Badger, laying a hand on the tarp that covered the pack.

"Let it alone!" Johnny warned sharply. "A tin badge don't give yuh the right to what's mine!" Then, sensing fully what was happening, he grabbed for his old bone-handled six-shooter.

He heard a quick hammering of hoofs, and as he half swung about, he saw Jory's big black horse rushing at him. He saw the gun in Jory's hand, heard the cruel, cynical laugh of the man, and flung himself aside, trying desperately to avoid the downward swing of that clubbed gun . . .

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As well as the long ones, there will of course be the usual collection of fine short stories in the next issue, too. Also, all the regularly featured departments. Be on hand for some good, rough-tough, six-gun fun!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AND now, a few lines from some of your many swell letters. Keep 'em coming along, folks. We sure do enjoy hearing what you have to say about the magazine.

In reply to Jane Graille, of Madison, Wisconsin, who stated in a roundabout way that she didn't care for the Tombstone and Speedy stories, I'll simply say that I can't agree with her at all. I'm sixty-three years old and read a lot, and I wouldn't trade Tombstone and Speedy for any other fiction. They're wonderful, so different from any other stories. I find that all I have to do to cure a case of the blues is to read one. I even reread them months later and get some good laughs. The only fault I can find with them is that they don't come out often enough.—*Mrs. N. M. Ludy, Sacramento, Calif.*

Mighty nice of yuh to come to the defense of Tombstone and Speedy thataway, Mrs. Ludy. Yes'm, mighty nice.

Navajo Raine, the Arizona Ranger, is my

favorite people. So keep giving us stories about him, will you?—*Ed Tildy, Virginia Beach, Va.*

Sure will, Ed, since you seem to be but one of a whole passel of folks who feel like that about Raine.

You can have Moran and Mack, Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Lum 'n Abner, etc., etc., etc. Me, I'll take Tombstone and Speedy any time. Boy, for pure unadulterated humor, those two long-shanked cowpokes take it, hands down. Don't you never ever part with them.—*Susan Van Armen, Boston, Mass.*

Not till you say so, anyway, Susan.

In your July issue, I rate Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's story, THE NECKTIE PARTY, right at the top of the ladder. Next, I'd put the Tombstone and Speedy yarn, TRIGGER TROUBLE IN TEJON, and then the short story, THERE'S ALWAYS A TRAIL, by Jim Mayo. Oh, I liked the Navajo Raine story, too, as well as most of the others. But those three were excellent with a capital X.—*Jerry Berdine, Little Rock, Arkansas.*

ThanX, Jerry.

It seems the more I read of your magazine the more I enjoy it. I've really got a kick out of Tuttle's last three Tombstone and Speedy novelets. Have been reading the novels and novelets of Jackson Cole for years and have always enjoyed his Ranger stories.—*Richard P. Cash, Whittier, Calif.*

Much obliged for your good word, Dick.

And that about does it for this time, folks. Thanks, everybody, and let's hear from more of you people who read the magazine regularly, and the more the merrier. Simply address a letter or postcard to The Editor, EXCITING WESTERN, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y., and blaze away. And with that we'll leave you—till next time. *Adios.*

—THE EDITOR.

Answers to Questions on Page 68

1. Bat Masterson.
2. No. The Indian Tepee consists of a circular framework of poles brought together at the top, covered with skins. A wigwam is an Indian hut made of poles and brush.
3. Tombstone, Arizona and Dodge City, Kansas.
4. From 1836 to 1845.
5. From 40 to 70 feet.

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